

RANSPACH,

OR

R

MYSTERIES OF A CASTLE;

*A NOVEL,*

IN TWO VOLUMES.



BY THE AUTHOR OF

EDWARD DE COURCY, &c.



VOL. I.

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# RANSPACH,

OR

## MYSTERIES OF A CASTLE.



### CHAP. I.

IN a small cottage, at the foot of a large mountain in Wales, two peasants, distinguished in the neighbourhood by the names of William and Margaret, had resided several years in the enjoyment of that tranquility, which the human heart cannot attain, till it

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hath

hath learned to curb the exuberance of vain desires.—William and Margaret had passed the earlier part of their lives in the family of RANSPACH, which exhibited to them many occasions of discovering, that true happiness is not found where pride and ambition maintain dominion; and the little portion of sincerity existing, in what is deemed civilized life, taught them to value the plainness and simplicity of the mountaineers, with whom they conversed.—William's occupation was that of a goatherd; besides which, he enjoyed a small salary, by superintending an adjacent domain, which belonged to the Baron Ranspach. Thus this honest pair obtained a peaceful competency, which they shared with two amiable children, a boy and girl.

Theo-

Theodore, the eldest, was, at the commencement of this history, about seven years of age. He was a lad of acute understanding, strong sensibility, and by nature utterly superior to the little arts of duplicity, as he abhorred every thing bordering on cruelty or meanness : in fine, though bred in a cottage, he early discovered a magnanimity and nobleness of soul, not always found with those of superior ranks.—Olivia, little more than a year younger, greatly resembled him in those qualities of the mind ; insomuch, that their respective characters seemed the exact counterpart of each other ; except that the bold and enterprizing genius of the one, was contrasted by the feminine delicacy and sweetness of the other.—In respect of external endowments, na-

ture had been extremely liberal to both. Olivia's figure was that of elegance and beauty: the features of Theodore, less soft, were equally interesting, while his form and air indicated the future display of every manly grace. As the various modes of fictitious refinement were entirely unknown in this humble cottage, the children were inured to exercise, industry, and simplicity. Olivia spun the wool, of which their homely garments were composed: Theodore followed the flocks of William over the mountains, and seldom returned on a summer's evening, without a posy of wild flowers to present to Olivia; who, on her part, took care to prepare for his repast, the richest milk of the dairy. Indeed, the tenderness and affection which had ever subsisted between them, was

was so remarkable, that the neighbouring peasants, when anxious to excite fraternal love, never failed to point out the example of Theodore and Olivia.

Whilst thus serenely glided the peaceful hours, maturing the virtues and sweetness of those lovely children, an event happened, which threw a deep gloom over their juvenile felicity.—

William had one evening returned from his daily occupation, having left his beloved fold in nocturnal security, and being met, as usual, by the affectionate inmates of his dwelling, had but just time to reach his wicker chair, which awaited him by the fire-side, when he put his hand to his heart—complained of unusual oppression—and instantaneously expired. To describe the horror

and amazement, which, on this fatal occasion, pervaded the humble dwelling, would be a futile attempt. The shrieks of Margaret presently drew the neighbours to the awful scene, and the night, for the first time, spread its raven wing over the cottage, charged with lamentation and woe; while the children alternately caressed the cold corpse, and exerted every endearing art to console the unhappy mother. At length, the curate of the village arrived, and having performed the usual office of his sacred function to the deceased, feelingly applied himself to console the sorrows of the widow, by such solid arguments as religion suggests. When the rites of burial had been duly performed, he again visited the cottage, and with the benevolence of the true  
chris-

christian, enquired what he could do to serve her.

“Alas! (said the mourner) I shall soon be beyond the reach of want or pain—But what is to become of these dear children, when I too shall be taken from them?”

“Fear not distant contingencies (replied the curate)—our duty is to improve the present period; and this, perhaps, is the whole of human wisdom.”

He then cast his eyes on the children, who stood weeping by the side of their mother. The glance, which was at first casual, became interesting—there was something uncommonly engaging in both; but the intelligent and open countenance

tenance of Theodore, particularly engaged his attention. "If this boy (thought he) were properly educated, he might shine in society." Here he paused for some moments. At length said he, "Theodore, will you come to my house, and learn to read?"—the child, surveying him with an air of dissatisfaction, coolly answered, "No."

"Why—should you not like to be wise and learned?"

"Yes—but I would not be wise or learned, except you would make my sister Olivia so also."

The curate smiled, and taking the little girl tenderly by the hand, added, "Your sister shall be welcome also—

I will

I will instruct you both, and afterwards endeavour to settle you in the world."

Margaret, who had listened in silence to this short conversation, now uttered an artless exclamation of gratitude and joy—she fell on her knees—she would have kissed the feet of this benevolent pastor; but he, in order to avoid those acknowledgements, which, much as he merited, it gave him pain to hear, quitted the cottage somewhat abruptly, having first enjoined the children to repair to his house on the following morning.

Mr. St. Leger was of the first order of human beings. We do not, by this, mean that he possessed any of those advantages, either of birth or fortune, which generally give men pre-eminence  
in

in the estimation of their fellow-creatures and themselves—on the contrary, this gentleman was no more than an humble village curate, on a very moderate stipend ; yet out of his limited income, he contrived to have a little fund, ever ready for the relief of the necessitous ; while to those, whose sorrows were beyond the reach of pecuniary succour, his sympathy and pious counsel were offered with a charity, which knew not the narrow bounds of prejudice or party : his sentiments were liberal, and his heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness ; and while he was himself superior to most of the weaknesses and failings of humanity, he knew how to pity and forgive them in others.—Such was the Man, who, in offering to become a tutor to these destitute

titute orphans, had expressed much less than he really felt: for from the moment he had suffered himself to advert to their defenceless situation, he had determined to adopt them as his own offspring; and by cultivating their tender minds, to qualify them for obtaining a decent subsistence during their future lives.





## CHAP. II.

THE active mind of the young Theodore exulted in the near prospect of attaining to those treasures of knowledge, which his humble condition seemed to have precluded him from the enjoyment of; and this pleasure was rendered more lively and pure, by the liberty which had been granted to Olivia, of attending him in those pursuits, which promised new and elegant satisfaction.—The habitation of Mr. St. Leger was at a considerable

able distance from the cottage, and they had to pass a mountain, whose lofty summit left their natal cottage in despicable obscurity below. They soon passed the boundaries of every former peregrination, and the ground they trod was all unknown;—a new horizon gradually rose before them, as the most novel and striking views of nature appeared on every side—an extensive valley, watered by rivulets, and enriched with verdant pastures, spread far before them on the right, while, in a circular direction, appeared various monastic turrets, churches, and lofty steeples, as it were, mocking in solemn pride the lowly roofs of the brown hamlets, which intermingled in the variegated landscape—beyond these, was a ridge of distant hills, above the blue tops of which appeared the ocean, sparkling with re-

fracted light. To complete the grandeur and beauty of so magnificent a scene, the sun was newly risen in unclouded majesty, and delineated to their admiring eyes, every minute or distant object in lucid characters. Astonished at the wondrous picture, the young travellers stopt—gazed at each other—then again on the enchanting scenery—while neither were able to utter the sublime sensations which rushed on their minds, on an occasion so novel and delightful. At length, Olivia, still fixing her eyes on the landscape, exclaimed, “Ah, Theodore, how beautiful!”

“It is beautiful,” he reiterated—but his glistening eye spoke disdain of the cool puerility of language.

Here they were again silent; and intently

tently gazing on the glowing landscape, did not perceive the approach of Mr. St. Leger, who had been some hours expecting their arrival—so insensibly had the moments glided. He gently chid their delay, to which Theodore modestly replied, by owning that they had felt themselves unable to quit a scene at once so new and delightful.

“This charming susceptibility delights me (returned the curate), as I trace in it that exquisite refinement of soul, which education may improve, but can never wholly impart. A taste for the beautiful and sublime is among the most desirable endowments of an elegant mind—it is the parent of unadulterated pleasures, which, like those resulting from pure religion, are independent of the world—Those happy favourites of na-  
C 2 ture,

ture, in whose breasts she has kindled a relish of her various charms, have within them a fund of ever new delight, and may, without envy, contemplate the gold and purple of courts."

Theodore, who did not entirely comprehend this discourse, simply demanded, whether there could be any who beheld such charming scenes, without feeling delight. "Yes (answered St. Leger)—thousands look on with brute unconscious gaze—for the taste I mean can only exist with purity of heart."

A soul immersed in worldly or vicious pursuits, no longer is capable of enjoying the satisfactions of unartificial life. Hence you will not hereafter be surprised, at finding few people disposed to be as happy as nature puts it in their power to become."

As

As they walked on conversing, the prospect, which the young couple had so much admired, gradually receded from their view, and a different one opened as they advanced—"Here (said Mr. St. Leger) we have another kind of scenery—not, indeed, magnificent, like that which you have been contemplating, but beautifully romantic :—observe this valley, bounded on one side by the craggy declivity of a mountain, on the opposite by a thick forest, the trees of which appear nearly as ancient as the soil ; while the dismantled turrets of the old castle, appearing amidst them, render the view truly picturesque."

As they proceeded, the whole east wing of a venerable building became apparent—all of it, at least, which had escaped the ravages of time—and sen-

sibly impressed a spectator with an idea of its original grandeur. A large gothic window remained entire, enriched by painted glass, the tints of which were rendered splendidly vivid by the sun shining at that time full upon it. Here a vista presented the remains of a superb arch, and some of the ramparts mantled thick with ivy—the rest of the ruins were concealed by the luxuriant woods;—enough, however, was discoverable, to excite an eager curiosity in the children to examine the whole; but this, Mr. St. Leger did not at that time admit. He told them, however, in answer to their several questions, that the castle had been anciently one of the most superb in the kingdom, as the style of its architecture, and the extent of the ruins, sufficiently indicated: the greater portion of the land in that part of the country had  
for-

formerly belonged to it ; and even now, a very extensive domain remained to the present proprietor.

“ And who, pray, is that ? ” asked Theodore.

“ The Baron Ranspach (returned the curate). He is the present inheritor ; though, I understand, it has not been many years in his family :—the old race of Ranspach being extinct, it revolved to the heirs at law.”

“ What pity (cried Olivia) that so sweet a place should have been suffered to fall into decay.”

“ True (answered Mr. St. Leger)—but by such incidents as these, we are re-

reminded of the instability of all human glory."

Following the course of the river, which watered this romantic vale, the party soon arrived at the dwelling of Mr. St. Leger; which, though not large, was remarkably neat, and had much about it which denoted a refined taste in the proprietor. "The first apartment through which they passed, was a lofty hall, which he had contrived to render remarkably pleasant, by enlarging the once narrow windows, so as readily to command a view of the charming country around; and as the house stood on an eminence, this view was equally extensive and beautiful. The room contained a library of books, several mathematical instruments, and various pieces of music.—" I know not (said Mr.

Mr. St. Leger) what appellation properly suits this apartment—I am certain, however, that here I enjoy much pure satisfaction in one pursuit or another.” He then took the harp, and played the following

*ODE TO SPRING.*

LIGHTLY dancing o'er the green,  
Welcome Spring at length is seen,  
Swelling buds, and blooming flowers,  
Genial suns, and vernal showers,  
Modest primrose, fair and shy;  
Violet of bolder dye;  
Hyacinthus, clad in blue,  
Crocus too, of ardent hue;  
Daisies spangling, thick the green,  
Gelid snow-drops' humble mein—  
All await to grace her reign,  
Sweets diffusing o'er the plain.  
Now no more from ebon throne,  
Winter, with terrific frown,  
Throws around his iron chain  
O'er the brook, the wood, the plain.

Mark

Mark the loosen'd riv'let free,  
From his icy tyranny,  
Oozing thro' the mellow ground,  
Murm'ring soft and grateful sound.  
From herbs and flow'rs' incense sweet,  
Fanning zephyrs rise to greet ;  
And whilst Philomela sings,  
Richly load their balmy wings.  
Loveliest daughter of the year,  
Varied charms for thee appear :  
Dormant Nature wakes to spread  
Rosy chaplets round thy head ;  
All her sons, with chearful voice,  
Hail thy presence, and rejoice ;  
Piping shepherds call up glee,  
All is joy and harmony.—  
Hence, ye boreal blasts, retire !  
Winter—see thy reign expire !  
With thy howling tempests haste  
To Siberia's dreary waste ;  
Or where, 'mid eternal snows,  
Hecla's burning torrent flows ;  
Whilst o'er all Britannia's isle,  
Lovely Spring extends her smile.

The

The tones were so soft and melodious, that both Theodore and Olivia stood transfixed in pleasure and surprise; expressing in whispers, yet loud enough to be heard by St. Leger, their ardent wish of acquiring so pleasing a science. It is probable, that he had not primarily intended more than to give them merely such instructions as were necessary to a due discharge of some of the common transactions of life; but a short acquaintance with his new pupils was sufficient to convince him, that they possessed that natural elegance of mind, which, when duly cultivated, prepares it for the enjoyment of refined pleasures; and he would have deemed it both cruel and unjust, to withhold the attainments of polite learning from those, who were by nature so well adapted to receive them. Science to him, had strewed the  
path

path of life with the richest satisfactions ; and why should he be averse to procure the same felicity to others ? Prudence sometimes suggested the impropriety of bestowing a refined education on those, who were probably destined to labour and toil—yet (cried he in answer), if by a cultivated mind, they be enabled to alleviate the weight of that toil, where will be the imprudence ? In fine, he determined to endow both Theodore and Olivia with every advantage of liberal education ; and that, while the former advanced in classical erudition, the latter should remain ignorant of no attainments, which could add dignity to her mind, and render her person interesting in the eye of sense, and refinement.



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### CHAP. III.

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AS the relief of Margaret was a part of Mr. St. Leger's benevolent plan, he took the two children entirely under his friendly roof, allowing them to make her occasional visits, with a view to perpetuate those relative charities, which he desired ever should subsist between persons thus tenderly allied. With respect to himself, he gradually acquired towards them all the sentiments of a fond parent; and they, on their part,

regarded him with an affection purely filial :—his domestic scenes were enlivened by their youthful vivacity, and his future prospects brightened by their opening virtues, which promised to become the solace of his old age.

A period of two years had glided away in the most agreeable manner, when Theodore and Olivia agreed to devote a certain holiday to the visiting of their good mother at the cottage.—In their way thither, they happened to pass those ruins, which had before so much engaged their attention ; and all that curiosity, which had then inspired them, again revived. Theodore observed, that it was yet many hours to sun-set, and Olivia remarked, that such a digression could not materially interfere with the design they had first set out

out on——it was therefore mutually agreed, to take a closer view of the old castle. As they approached the ruin, its solitary grandeur struck them with secret awe ; but they found it difficult of access, as the whole spot was thickly covered with entangling briars and wild shrubs. Their attempts to force a passage through the brakes, disturbed the birds, which long had reposed uninterrupted in the ivied battlements ; and a prodigious flight of owls and ravens, suddenly started from their concealment, and by their gloomy notes, brake the solemn silence which reigned around. Theodore burst into a laugh, which was re-echoed through the several dreary cells and apertures of the building : perceiving his companion looked terrified, he took her hand, and soon discovered, that the trees in one part formed an ave-

nue, which he rightly conjectured, led to the principal entrance. The grass and brambles were here equally troublesome ; however, they at length came to the portal, the arch of which was nearly entire, and a gate, which once had belonged to it, lay buried by weeds on the ground—beneath this arch they passed into a spacious quadrangle, divided in the midst by a broad pavement, that led to the grand door, over which an ancient coat of arms was still legible.

Theodore, whose intrepidity seemed excited by the difficulties they had encountered, advanced boldly to the door, but found it fastened on the inside—he then tried three others that presented themselves, which also were fastened—a fourth belonging to the east turret easily gave way to his efforts, and a  
spiral

spiral stair-case of stone was seen within. Olivia, at first, objected to their entering, but was soon prevailed on to indulge that curiosity yet farther, which they had already been at much pains to gratify—they therefore, hand in hand, ascended the stair-case, and entered a suit of desolate apartments, the roof of which was totally decayed, the walls were covered with moss, except, that here and there hung fragments of a substance, that once had been tapestry—a few mouldering chairs, expressed a perishing proof of some human beings having formerly resided here. This range of apartments led to the centre of the building, which appeared in better preservation—a large saloon exhibited the remains of some very superb furniture—the figures on the tapestry were yet apparent, and the once glowing colours

were still tolerably bright—the covering of the chairs was of the richest silk.—From this apartment they passed into another, still better secured from the weather, and in very decent order; the walls appearing perfectly dry, and the furniture but little decayed—around this room, hung several whole-length portraits, among which was that of a boy, about two or three years old—this picture did not appear so ancient as the rest, as the colours of the drapery were scarcely faded.

“ I could almost fancy, Theodore, (cried Olivia) that this sweet child smiles on me.”

“ I do not know that (he replied)—but certain I am, that it perfectly resembles you, Olivia.”

“ I de-

“ I declare, Theodore, you could not have said any thing more pleasing to me—there is something in that countenance which delights me—I feel—I feel—as though I could gaze on it for ever.”

In fact, she continued with her eyes intently fixed on the portrait, till Theodore having examined the rest, reminded her, that it was time to depart. Unable, however, to suppress the rising enthusiasm of her soul, she still stood gazing—then, with an air of transport, exclaimed,—“ It is more than painting, Theodore—it breathes—it will speak to me !”

Smiling at her rhapsody, he gently took her hand, to re-conduct her from the place, when a deep and heavy groan  
seemed

seemed to issue from some adjoining apartment—both trembled and turned pale—presently a door shut with such violence, as shook the floor on which they stood.

“The place is surely inhabited (whispered Theodore)—let us go out as softly as possible.”

Olivia, who needed no persuasion, followed him with a palpitating heart through the apartments, and with joy they again found themselves at the portal: not daring yet to utter a syllable, they flew from the spot, regardless of briars and thorns, nor allowed themselves to stop, till at some considerable distance from the wood, they were met by a countryman returning from his labour. Theodore stopt him, and enquired

quired if any one lived at the old castle.

“And do you think any one would live at it (returned the man, with a look, which Theodore did not then comprehend)—it should not be me, I assure you.”

“You are certain, friend, that it is not inhabited?”

“Yes, yes—I am pretty certain,” answered the other, and immediately hurried on.—Theodore now laughed heartily, and observed, that they had shown their folly, in being frightened at the wind forcing a door.


“But the groan (cried Olivia)—Was that also wind?”

“Un-

“ Undoubtedly—it might easily occasion such a sound, when pent within the various passages and vaults of the ruin.”

Thus satisfied, Olivia resumed her composure, and proposed visiting the castle once more, in order to review the charming portrait. “ It is scarcely worth while (he replied)—but you know, Olivia, that your pleasure is always mine ; and therefore, we will come hither whenever you like.”

It was late by the time of their arrival at Margaret's cottage, where they were to spend the night ; and not judging their recent adventure of any consequence, it was suffered to pass in silence.





## CHAP. IV.

IN an age, when gloomy austerity was generally mistaken for devotion, Mr. St. Leger appeared a singular character: for though none of his clerical brethren possessed more genuine piety than himself, few of them understood its just and natural relation to the social duties of life. This good priest, on the contrary, rightly deemed the offices of humanity, and active benevolence, to make an essential part of religion; he was, therefore,

fore, at once the best neighbour, and the most chearful companion : not only was he an admirer of the liberal arts, but a good proficient in most of them : his landscapes, copied from nature, had all the richness and softness of the best artists : not a plant or flower flourished on the neighbouring mountains, but was exactly delineated by his pencil ; and scarcely was there a production of nature, which he had not analyzed with philosophical minuteness.—In these amusements, his mind daily expanded in that rational piety, which dogmatic creeds, and arbitrary systems, would inculcate but in vain :—as every pursuit of this kind, added something to his enlarged comprehension of the harmony and beauty of creation, his devotional taste became more sublime, till it might be said, that his whole life was one continued

tinued oraison. Such was Mr. St. Leger—a saint, not in name, but essence—not buried in a monastery, affronting heaven by the formal offerings of a cloistered heart, but mingling with his fellow men, and by a series of active beneficence, honouring the universal parent of mankind.

Under the eye of such a preceptor, the susceptible minds of Theodore and Olivia could scarcely fail of imbibing every amiable and virtuous impression: they loved and revered so beneficent a patron, and in him they loved and revered virtue—they became enamoured of its beauty—they caught its sacred enthusiasm, and were awakened to every noble energy—they learned to expand the wings of intellect—to reason

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justly

justly—and to think with candour, generosity, and tenderness.

Behind the habitation of Mr. St. Leger, were several natural grottos, scooped in the mountain, one of which was the favourite retreat of Theodore and Olivia, whenever they were disposed to enjoy the charms of music, of which their good tutor had imparted to them a more than ordinary knowledge. The situation of the grotto, near a smoothly gliding river, and the concave construction of its roof, peculiarly adapted it to the improvement of those tones, which they severally drew from the lute or harp. One evening, as they sat thus amused, they perceived Margaret conducting a stranger across the field which led to the dwelling: the obscurity of the hour, allowed

allowed them to discover no more than that the unknown person had an air of uncommon dignity, and seemed richly dressed : they entered the house together, after which Margaret came towards the grotto, and with an expression of joy on her countenance, exclaimed, “ The Baron is come—thank heaven, the Baron Ranspach is come, and has already asked for a sight of my children.—Well, who knows what may happen—Come along, then, and show yourselves.”

Neither Theodore or Olivia felt any ambition to be presented to the great man within, but accustomed implicitly to reverence her commands, they arose immediately, and followed her into the house, where they found the Baron in earnest discourse with Mr. St. Leger, and for some moments they had leisure

to admire the graceful dignity of his figure, and the sweetness of his countenance, over which, however, there seemed to be cast a shade of deep melancholy. He was apparently about forty years of age, and was still a handsome person. As soon as he perceived the entrance of Margaret and the young people, he regarded them with a look of complacency, commended the elegance of Olivia's mien,—then taking Theodore by the hand, seemed to examine him with strict scrutiny.—“ And this is your son, my good Margaret—the same which I saw in your arms on my last journey into Wales ?”

Margaret replied in the affirmative—stroking down the flowing ringlets of Theodore, and bidding him look up like a man. The Baron paused some minutes

nutes—then asked what line of life she designed him for.

“ A goatherd, my lord, as poor William was before him.”

The Baron made no reply to this, and the curate took that opportunity of gratifying both his affection and honest pride, by producing several little testimonies of Theodore's progress in the several branches of education, with which the other seemed much pleased. Margaret then retired with her children to the cottage, for the house was too small to admit so respectable a guest, without the absence of some of its usual inhabitants ; and as the whole village was destitute of decent accommodations, the Baron was that night to repose beneath the roof of Mr. St. Leger.—

As they sat at breakfast on the following morning. the Baron thus expressed himself:—"I have been reflecting with a good deal of pleasure, my dear friend, on that beneficent temper, which leads you to find your felicity in promoting that of others. These children, whom your kind efforts have snatched from barbarism, will owe to you the comfort and happiness of their future lives."

"And I (answered St. Leger) am indebted to them, for a great deal of present solace, and a far greater portion to be paid me hereafter—for to say truth, my lord, I expect the rising virtues of these young people, will pillow my old age."

"May they amply fulfil so just an expectation—yet permit me to ask one question

question.—“Is it practicable for you, in your retired line of life, to procure them situations, suitable to the education they receive?”

Mr. St. Leger appeared somewhat embarrassed by the question, which the Baron observing, continued thus:—  
“This idea, my friend, which I perceive interests you also, has put me on devising a little plan, to which I doubt not you will accede. Theodore shall, when you judge it expedient, be placed at a military academy, where he can acquire the knowledge requisite for a soldier, which, with your leave, he shall hereafter be: I will take on myself the charge of this part of his education, and thenceforth his future fortune shall be peculiarly my care.”

Struck

Struck with admiration at so unexpected an instance of generosity, St. Leger was about to express his warm acknowledgments in behalf of Theodore ; but the Baron studiously prevented him, by asking, how he intended to dispose hereafter of Olivia. “ You must consider (said he) that the advantages of a refined education, have yet this counterbalance—that by rendering our sensibility more exquisite. they prepare us for feeling the evils we meet with more acutely.. It is then proper, that your anxiety on this head should be completely removed ; and therefore, allow me to assure you, that should she be so unfortunate, as to lose the precious patron of her youth, my house shall be her asylum, and I will myself complete the generous work you have so nobly undertaken : mean time, might I not be  
allowed

allowed to pay you for her board, and other expences?"

"Her expences! (reiterated St. Leger, a little disconcerted)—Ah, my lord—Do not make me feel little in my own eyes by such suggestion."

"Pardon me, dear St. Leger—it is I who feel that sensation. I, who am blest with more wealth than I have any rational use for, see myself keenly reproached in these actions of yours—Let me, at least, have some share in them."

"And would your lordship deprive me of the purest pleasure I am capable of feeling?"

"No—I would augment it—and therefore will put it in your power to be yet

yet more extensively useful. You cannot, I think, object to that on your own principles—therefore hear me, my friend—The benefice, which you reside on merely as curate, is henceforth your own—the incumbent is not expected to survive many days, and I am convinced, I have interest sufficient to secure you in possession of it; to which I will add, some portions of arable and pasture land, from the estate I have in this country.—Hold, Sir (perceiving St. Leger about to reply)—You have already enough—for yourself I know it—but there are many to whom I owe assistance; and by whose hand could such assistance be conveyed, so conveniently as by yours?"

There was something in the Baron Ranspach, that so forcibly interested the  
love

love and reverence of Theodore, that before Margaret was stirring on the following morning, he was at the house of Mr. St. Leger; where, finding the family not yet risen, he strolled into the little garden adjoining, and took his seat in an arbour shaded by roses and eglantine. It had been the scene of many delicious hours; for here the good St. Leger was accustomed to entertain and instruct his beloved pupils, in those maxims which he deemed necessary to their future conduct through the journey of life. He had spoken much to them of that world, of which they were yet both experimentally ignorant; but the pictures he had drawn were calculated to abate, rather than stimulate the ardour of youth to engage in its busy scenes. The melancholy depression so visible on the countenance of the Baron, convinced Theodore,

dore, that he could not be happy, and by a natural concatenation of ideas, he had so closely connected misery with public life, as really to believe, the retired mode of life embraced by Mr. St. Leger, afforded the utmost enjoyment of human felicity. Under the force of this impression, he took his pencil, and wrote the following lines :

When fortune deigns on mortals to bestow  
Superior bliss, she gives them solitude.  
Delicious fate! which not th' encircled brow  
Of majesty can taste.—Soft fountain! whence  
Flows the pure stream of unadulterate joy.  
Ye whom the genius of ambition fires!  
From pinnacles of visionary height  
Look down on sacred solitude, and own  
She offers joys your greatness cannot buy.  
Ye greatly favour'd few! who durst retire  
Far from the busy world's intrusive ken,  
The irksome din of sublunary care,  
The empty trifling bustle of mankind,  
'Tis here in scenes of virtue and of peace,  
You taste the genuine sweet of human life.  
All-bounteous Nature opens to your view,

And

And pours her lavish beauties on the sense.  
Yon trace the God-head in his various works,  
The wood, the lawn, all yielding full delight.  
In ev'ry scene, you recognize your God.

Absorbed in the enthusiasm, with which a youthful imagination embraces a favourite theme, Theodore did not perceive the approach of the Baron, till the latter had made himself master of the subject, which engrossed the youth's attention.

“ 'Tis a pleasing picture you have drawn (said the Baron) in the warm colouring of youthful fancy—but you were not born for solitude, my boy—the world demands your services and talents.”

“ And will the world repay those with happiness, my lord?” demanded Theodore, with an air of simplicity.

The Baron averted his face, and wept. He then pressed the youth to his bosom, and after some moments of deep emotion, replied, "Not always, Theodore—but if we cannot secure happiness, it is our duty to deserve it."—Then taking him by the hand, they went both together into the house, where Margaret, who had anxiously missed her son, was arrived, not without painful forebodings, that the forward promptitude of his temper, might have led him to a behaviour improper, in the presence of so great a man, as she considered the Baron to be. Her fears, however, subsided, when she saw them both enter the house, and read in the countenance of her lord, evident expression of pleasure and satisfaction.

The Baron now entered on business,  
enquired

enquired into the affairs of his tenants and vassals, and made several dispositions for their future comfort and advantage; after which, he requested Mr. St. Leger to provide a proper person for supplying the place of his late trusty overseer, William. These matters engrossed the rest of the morning, when the Baron, having tenderly taken leave of the good pastor, and the two amiable young people, presented a grateful token of his friendship to Margaret, and departed with an emotion of regret, which he vainly endeavoured to conceal.

“He weeps (cried Theodore)—the Baron actually weeps.—Is he not happy?”

“I suspected he was not, from the first of my seeing him (added Olivia)—

there is a kind of fixed melancholy in his face."

They both, as they spoke, looked on Margaret for an explanation, who replied,—“ Gold cannot buy happiness—if it could, the Baron Ranspach would be happy.”

“ Ah ! dear mother (cried Olivia)—Do inform us something of this good nobleman.—I am sorry to think he is not as happy, as I am convinced he deserves to be.”

Mr. St. Leger was gone to accompany the Baron a few miles on horseback, and finding themselves alone, Margaret proceeded as follows :

“ When I first lived in the family, there was not a handsomer or more  
cheer-

cheerful nobleman in the kingdom, than Lord Rufus (now the Baron)—every body reckoned him the pride of the English nobility. Ah! well-a-day. He was then married to a charming lady, who had birth, but no fortune. However, the old lord approved of the match at the first, and certainly she was the prettiest creature, and the best too, that ever breathed. Ah! poor soul! I know not how it was, but all of a sudden, the old lord took dislike to her, and people said, it was because he wanted his son to marry some German lady, who had a great deal of riches, though the family was already as rich as could well be, and it was thought the old lord wanted to break my poor lady's heart; but Lord Rufus was so fond of her, that it could not be easily done, while he was near. At length,

his father would make him go to the wars. Ah! how my lady and he took on about that, and she, too, was near lying-in, or they would have gone both together. Well, he was forced to leave her behind, and such a parting sure never was before. Alas! they little thought they never should meet again."—Here Margaret paused, and wept—her young auditors accompanied her with their tears. After some minutes, she resumed—"When Lord Rufus was gone, my lady did not care to be with her father-in-law, who, she knew, did not like her, and therefore proposed going to the castle in Scotland. This she was allowed readily to do; but when the morning came for her to set out, not one servant was suffered to go with her. The old lord said churlishly, that she would find attendants enough where she was going.

going. It was in vain that she begged only for leave to take me, and though I begged also on my knees, he would not consent."

"Ah! the brute," cried Olivia.

"Poor lady (added Theodore, sobbing), how I pity her—but go on, mother, if you please."

"Alas! child, my story will soon be ended. From that day I never saw her, and the news soon came that she was dead in child-birth. I should have told you, that my poor William was also a servant in the family, and had long eyed me with great kindness.—Well, the place was now so dismal, and every thing looked so melancholy, that I longed to get out of it; and therefore  
William,

William, having gained the old lord's consent, we were married, and came to live here, in Wales, in order to look after my lord's estate."

"And what became of poor Lord Rufus after this?"

"Ah! there were strange tales. It was said, that his father chained him in a dungeon, till he would consent to marry the German heiress—that is the present baroness, who has brought him a son and daughter: they say, she is as ill-tempered and ugly, as my poor dear lady was good and lovely. The old lord died soon after, and so they had titles and money enough—but all would not do—the poor dear Lord Rufus (I should say the Baron) has never looked merry since. Ah! it is a pity that, he  
should

should not be happy ; for never was any one so beloved and adored, by the tenants and servants, as he is. Oh ! he is the kindest and best of noblemen."

" But, dear mother, pray what became of the first lady's child ?"

" A son it was, and they say, a lovely boy. It died of fits a short time before this hateful second marriage."

Margaret's relation left her hearers impressed with very painful sensations, which were visible on their countenances, when Mr. St. Leger returned, who soon took an occasion to mention the plan which the Baron had devised, respecting the future designation of Theodore—but it was not received with all the satisfaction he expected. Theodore

dore, indeed, at the first mention of the military profession, flushed with satisfaction and ardour ; but he cast a tender glance on Olivia, and presently fixed his eyes pensively on the ground. She, on her part, looked equally dissatisfied, and endeavoured to suppress a rising sigh. Mr. St. Leger took no notice of their emotions at that time, nor did he pursue the subject, knowing that it would be some considerable time, before the first steps of this measure could be carried into effect.





## CHAP. V.

THREE years more were suffered to elapse, without any further mention of the military school, except what sometimes occurred in the letters of the Baron, who constantly maintained an epistolary correspondence with Mr. St. Leger. In this time, the characters of Theodore and Olivia were distinctly marked, and those amiable propensities, which at first had perhaps been instinctive impressions, became settled into principle.

principle. Education had fostered the tender buds of virtue, and habit had imparted stability.

Sometime in the course of this period, a second opportunity offered of visiting the old castle, which Olivia was still eager to do, in order to contemplate again the portrait, which had so much interested her. The summer was now on the decline, yet the air was dry and clear on the day which they had appropriated to this long meditated purpose. Having, on a former occasion, explored a path to the ruin, they experienced no great difficulty in passing through the wood, and were soon within the quadrangle. Their steps were directed to the door of the east turret, which could not now be opened—the circumstance was a little unaccountable; however, they

they stopped not to consider it, but advanced to the great door—this, contrary to their first experience, was easily opened, and they saw within a spacious hall; the paved floor had given way, and through many a ghastly chasm discovered the cellarage below: it was possible, however, to pass with caution on the rafts, which they determined to do, and got safely to a door on the opposite side; from thence, by a long narrow passage, they came to a flight of stairs, composed of oak, as black as ebony, with massy balustrades of the same. Several doors appeared as they passed along—some open, some shut—but neither of them disclosing the apartment in which the portraits were deposited, nor any thing likely to interest curiosity. At length they came into a gallery, in which hung several ancient

coats of armour, so disposed, as to give the figures of as many warriors, armed *cap-a-pee*. Olivia shuddered—on which Theodore observed, that it was nothing but a parcel of old rusty iron, and encouraged her to proceed. A door at the farthest end of the gallery, led them into an apartment, in which stood a bed—the hangings retained marks of their original grandeur; several pictures were fixed around, but neither of them the one they were in search of. They now attempted to find the saloon, without success, but came to a room, the windows of which presented a most beautiful view through a chasm of the adjoining mountains. As they stood, admiring the charming prospect, Olivia, feeling herself somewhat fatigued, advanced to an old velvet chair, which stood near the wainscot; but she no sooner touched it,

it, than it fell to pieces, and with it displaced a pannel of the wainscoting. When the dust occasioned by this incident had subsided, they saw a small iron box on the floor, which had doubtless fallen from a recess in the wall, now plainly discoverable. On Theodore's slightly touching it with his foot, the lock, already loosened, flew back, and several mouldy parchments appeared within. The curiosity of Olivia was now forcibly excited—she drew them out, one by one, though without seeking to know their contents, and among them met with a miniature picture of the same child, whose portrait she had seen formerly in another apartment. “Let us put up the papers (said Theodore)—we have no business with them.”

“No business with them,” repeated a hollow voice.

"Quickly (cried Olivia, with trepidation) replace the box."

"Replace the box," reiterated the voice.

"Pho! (cried Theodore, observing she was terrified)—it is only an echo."

However, they both made haste to leave the room, and walked pretty fast to the black stair-case, from whence they descended to the hall. Theodore gave her his hand, in order to repass the rafts, which he exhorted her to do with caution; but he had scarcely spoken, when her foot slipped, and she fell, dragging him along with her, into the vaults below. As neither had sustained any injury by the fall, a mutual laugh succeeded their temporary amazement; but it was soon suppressed, by reflecting, that

that except they should find a way thro' the subterraneous passages, it was impracticable to escape, the depth being prodigious. Olivia now burst into tears ; but her companion, far from indulging a pernicious despondency, busied himself in examining the walls, in quest of some door. This was not to be performed with facility, as it was already the dusk of evening, and a clouded sky anticipated the night :— however, he discovered a door fastened by an iron bolt, so rusted by time, that it seemed impossible to move it ; but taking up a stone, after many efforts he succeeded. The door opened, but to whither could not be conjectured, as all within was total darkness. Bidding Olivia not to fear, but follow him, he entered the dark and narrow passage—

so narrow, as not to admit them both abreast. Here they proceeded some time in silence, till they came to a part, from which branched a different passage. Olivia, not aware of this, continued to walk on with timid steps, and a palpitating heart, still imagining Theodore before her, and at length found herself in a room, which admitted the light by two windows: it was, however, so dusky, that no object could be distinctly discerned.—Now, for the first time, she discovered her dreadful mistake. Theodore was not with her. To return, or to proceed, appeared equally horrible; and she now could have no prospect, but of passing the night in that desolate situation, separated also from her dear faithful conductor. As she stood musing on what step to pursue, a human figure

figure, of more than ordinary height, seemed to move along the wall—it disappeared, and she saw it no more.

At this moment, when every faculty was frozen with terror, the welcome sound of Theodore's voice broke on her ear. He had proceeded to the extremity of the subterraneous passage, without missing her; but on arriving at an iron gate, which led out of the ruin, he stopt to congratulate her on the happy deliverance, when, with horror and surprise, he became sensible of her absence. Rushing back through the passage, he first perceived the one which must have had occasioned the unfortunate mistake. Without expatiating on the incident, he carefully led her to the iron gate, and now with joy they found themselves completely liberated: but

Olivia's

Olivia's spirits had suffered so much in this adventure, that she was now unable to proceed, and with difficulty kept herself from fainting. Theodore, alarmed, took her tenderly in his arms, and seated her on the grass, at some distance from the ruin, where she gradually recovered, so far as to relate the circumstance that had principally occasioned her terror in the apartment she had wandered into; on which he began to rally her visionary apprehensions, assuring her, that it could be nothing more than a deception of vision; and as Mr. St. Leger had instructed him in natural philosophy, he could reason on the point, if not demonstratively, at least plausibly, and succeeded so far, as to satisfy Olivia, that the apparition was merely the effect of imagination.

It

It was by this time so dark, as to render it impracticable to explore their way through the wood; and as Theodore knew the moon would shortly rise, he prevailed on her to wait for the friendly rays. They now began to chat on various little matters, which beguiled the time till the moon arose, and they prepared to depart. Olivia suddenly started, and in a whisper, desired him to look towards a certain spot, on which the rays of the moon, admitted through an opening of the trees, fell more direct. He did so, and plainly saw a tall figure move along, with a slow and solemn motion—wrapt in a black flowing mantle: no more of its form was apparent, than the countenance, which was of a pale and ghastly hue, and the eyes seemed to dart supernatural fire. Theodore, who could not now distrust the  
evi-

evidence of his senses, was firmly persuaded, that some part of the ruin was inhabited—but by whom, or why any human being should chuse so desolate a spot, was totally unaccountable. They made haste, however, to quit the wood, nor ventured to discourse on the subject till nearly within sight of Margaret's cottage, where, as before, they had designed to pass the night. Theodore then said,—“ That groan, Olivia, which we heard on our first visit to this place, was not an ideal sound—I am of opinion also, that the echo, as I just now thought it, was really a voice.”

“ Besides, you remember, Theodore, that it pronounced our words with entire distinction.”

“ True—the ruin is certainly inhabited—we have been too bold, I think.”

Here

Here Olivia recollected, that she had put the miniature into her bosom, and totally forgotten the circumstance.—

“ Ah! Theodore (cried she)—we are both ruined—I have here the picture—How can it be returned ?”

“ It never can (he replied)—but be not alarmed—it is of little value, and we will consult Mr. St. Leger about it.”

These words brought them to the cottage, where Margaret, who had for some hours been expecting them, eagerly demanded, what had occasioned their delay. There was nothing to be said but the truth, and they immediately gave her an account of their adventure; on which the old woman, turning as pale as ashes, exclaimed—“ Ah! how durst you be thus daring!—mercy on us! how I tremble but to think of it!

“ Do

“Do not be alarmed, mother—for though we saw the gentleman who lives there, he did not see us.”

“What!—have you seen any thing then?”

“Nothing but the gentleman.”

“Ah! Holy Virgin! (crossing herself)—you have seen the ghost—the castle is haunted, and nobody dares venture near it.—My poor dear William would at any time have gone two miles out of his way, rather than pass that Wood, ever since he saw the light glimmer there.”

Olivia now trembled—Theodore looked amazed, and knew not what to think. As he had never heard Mr. St. Leger’s opinion on the subject of spectres, he had no argument ready to oppose

pose to a belief of that kind, and therefore could only ask, what reason there could be for supposing, that the castle was haunted; to which Margaret replied, —“ Our neighbour Bertha can tell— I only know, that none of the present family of Ranspach would ever reside there. The old lord, they say, once thought of it, but he was forced to give it up. I suppose, something wrong has been done there; but old Bertha never cares to speak of it.”

Theodore's inquisitiveness was no ways abated by this limited intelligence, and he determined on getting the whole story from Bertha. Accordingly, the next day, they called at her cottage, and found her nearly dark with age, and bending under the weight of years and decrepitude. Few compliments were

necessary, and Theodore soon opened the business which had led them there, by desiring her to inform them, what persons were represented by the pictures in the castle.

“ The old Ranspach family (answered she)—my lord and lady are among them, as also their son, a child of about two years old.”

“ Ah! that, (cried Olivia)—that is the sweet picture I admire. But, dear Bertha (taking the miniature from her bosom)—do you know any thing of this resemblance?”

“ To be sure I do—it is my young lord, whom I just now spoke of.—Know it!—strange if I did not, truly; for I held him in my own lap at the time it was drawn.—But pray, how came you by it, Livy?”

“ I

“ I met with it in the castle, where we last evening were.—Ah ! Bertha ; we saw the strangest thing ! ”

“ No doubt—no doubt—strange things have been seen there.—But what was the apparition like ? ”

“ We can't precisely say whether man or woman—but it was a tall figure, wrapt in a black mantle.”

“ Ah, mercy ! (dropping her beads).—But, look you, it could not be my poor lady that was poisoned.—No, no—I should rather think it is my lord, who can't rest, because, as one may say, it was all along of him that such foul deeds were done ; though, poor soul, he was far enough from thinking such a thing.”

“ Poisoned ! Bertha (repeated Theodore)—By whom was the poor lady poisoned ? ”

“Why, by the villain Welsted—who else would do it?”

“And who was Welsted?—come tell us all the story, dear Bertha.”

“Not I, truly—you want to carry William a tale, do you—but old birds, they say, are not to be caught with chaff.”

“You forget that my poor father is no more,” said Olivia, in a tremulous voice.

“Aye, so I did—but then, Margaret is alive; and so I say nothing.—Good lack, why do you ask me?—what should I know about it?”

“But Bertha (resumed Theodore, with some address)—you have said, there was murder committed. Now the best way to keep your secret from being blown, is to tell us the whole.”

Bertha,

Bertha, a good deal embarrassed by this hint, bade them sit down, and she would say every thing she knew about it, provided they would promise not to reveal it.

"We do, we do," exclaimed both.

"Well, then—when I was a young woman, and lived servant at that castle, it was as glorious a place as the sun ever shone on. Ah! what sumptuous living was there! and what quantities of meat, drink, and clothing, were every week given to poor folks! The baron and baroness were a noble couple—I shall never see their like again. Ah! well-a-day! And so my lord went to the wars, and left my lady with the young lord, about a year and half old: they had buried all their children, but him; and if he should die, the title, and

all belonging to it, was to go to this Welsted. It must have been on this account, that my lord was always so fond of that man; though my lady could never endure him, and sure enough she had cause to dislike him; for even then, he was a false wicked creature. Well—my lord made a will, and left him executor and guardian to the young lord. Every body saw this was a wrong thing—but he had the length of my lord's foot, and so the matter rested for a time. Poor soul! I doubt he sorely repents it now, which is the reason that he can't rest in his grave, to think that he was the cause of his wife and son being murdered."

"The son, too, murdered!"

"You shall hear.—My lord was killed in the wars, and so this Welsted  
takes

takes up his abode at the castle, under pretence of taking care of things :—he had not been there a month, before my lady began to droop sorely—worse and worse she grew, and in less than a year she died in my arms. We all thought he had given her slow poison, but nobody dared to say as much. Just a month before, to a day, she caused that very picture of her child to be drawn, which you now have. Ah! how she kissed it when done—it made me weep to see her. So, as I was saying, she died; and then Welsted, pretending a world of regard for the young lord, must send him to London forsooth, in order to be well brought up, as if he would not have been taken the best care of here, where there was not a soul, but would have died to serve him, if need were—and then he must go by sea, because

cause it was easier travelling than by land. Ah me ! the wickedness that there is in this world. Well—to sea they took him, along with one Benedict, servant of the Welsteds ; but neither he, nor the young lord, were ever heard of after—and so Welsted took the title of Baron Ranspach, and all the fine estate that belonged to it ; but he could have no peace with all his grandeur and riches at the castle, and at last he quite forsook it, and so it went to ruin.”

“ The horrid monster ! (exclaimed Theodore)—what became of him ? ”

“ He was, you know, the father of the present baron, and a cruel father he was. Some say, that he murdered his daughter-in-law, because he wanted his son to marry a norman gentlewoman. The old villain died miserably at last, and

and doubtless is now suffering the punishment due to his crimes.—Ah! if I were rich, the poor dear soul that haunts the ruins, should not want for masses to set him at rest."

Theodore and Olivia, deeply impressed by this horrid relation, took leave of Bertha, and returned to Mr. St. Leger. Olivia carefully deposited the miniature picture in a small casket, with a view of replacing it in its former situation, should an opportunity ever occur,





## CHAP. VI.



ONE evening in the following winter, as Mr. St. Leger and his beloved companions were cheerfully sitting around a blazing fire, word was brought them, that Margaret had been suddenly seized with an alarming malady; on which, late as the hour was, he instantly accompanied Theodore and Olivia to the cottage. The good woman was already in the pangs of dissolution, but her intellects remained undisturbed, and seeing  
Mr.

Mr. St. Leger approach the bed, she looked earnestly at him—then cast a wishful glance on her children, who stood weeping at her pillow.

“ I perfectly comprehend you (cried the pastor)—be satisfied—these dear children shall ever be my care.”

Margaret laid her hand on her heart, and desired all but those three would leave the room—then raising herself on her pillow, she spoke as follows :

“ I am easy—I am resigned—but there is a secret which ought not to be buried with me—Theodore and Olivia are not my children.”

Mr. St. Leger began to conclude, that her reason was disturbed ; but far from showing any signs of mental derangement,

ment, she again resumed—" I perceive my story staggers your belief, sir—but this is not a time for falshood. Soon after I came to live in this country, William, who had been at work in the woods, brought home one evening a beautiful boy, which, he said, he had found lying on the ground in his way. I hope, sir, it was no sin to think—I did think it might be *his*, though not mine, so I readily consented to rear it. The child could not be more than a year old for certain—and so I did rear it, and soon came to love it, as though it had been my own flesh and blood, and from that time I never asked my husband any questions; but if he had not died suddenly, I would have begged him to own the truth."

" And this child is Theodore," said Mr. St. Leger.

" It

“ It is—but let me proceed, ere my breath fails. About a year after this, when we lived in the hamlet by the sea-side, it chanced to be a dreadful stormy night, and a brig was observed tossing in the tempest not far from shore—we could see it from our chamber-window, and I said, “ William, step down, and see if you can do any good to the poor wretches ;” and I, fearful of staying behind, went also. Ah, St. Peter !—what a sight was there !—a lady washed ashore with an infant clinging to her breast !—We got the bodies into our cottage, thinking them both dead, and meaning to get christian burial for them. It happened, that the breath was not quite gone, for our warm fire helped the poor lady once more to open her eyes, and she folded the infant to her breast, and cried, My child, my child. This was

all she ever spoke, and before morning, she was quite dead. I had wrapt the child in a blanket, and rubbed it, and chafed it, and got it to recover. The poor lady was decently buried, and I thought of breeding up the child, as nobody else seemed willing to have any thing to do with it. William, at the first, said it should not stay, but after a time he loved it too—and so, sir, we bred up Olivia also.”—Here Margaret ordered a small trunk to be brought her:—“ This (added she) contains all which I found about your poor mother, Olivia, when I stript her for burial.—It is yours—take care of it—and if ever you discover your family, remember Margaret, who dearly loved you.”

She then desired to be alone with Mr. St. Leger, who had only the easy task

task of imparting to conscious innocence, the confidence it was entitled to. There was no guilt to awaken terror and despair, and her confession described a life of innocence. When this was over, Theodore and Olivia were again admitted, who knelt at her bed-side, suffused in tears of tenderness, gratitude, and sorrow ; nor did they feel their filial obligations in the least superseded, by the knowledge that she was not their real parent. Serene, and full of hope, Margaret survived the remainder of the night only ; for when the morning sun began to relumine the humid earth, her gentle spirit took its flight above the visible diurnal sphere. She was buried in the village church-yard, by the side of William, and often did Theodore and Olivia weep the purest tears of affection on the humble grave.

It was one calm silent evening, when the busy world was hushed, that wandering arm in arm around the awful spot, they retraced in their pensive converse, those happy hours of childhood, which they had passed beneath the paternal regards of that faithful pair, who now lay mouldering beneath the sod. — “ Ah! blissful moments! (cried Olivia) —never, never will ye return.—I had then a brother—but that dear, that precious tie, is broken—and I go a solitary being, destitute of a kindred breast, to share the feelings of my soul.” At these words, her tears flowed more copiously, and she sat down on the grave. Theodore placed himself beside her—he threw his arms fondly around her.----“ Olivia (said he), have you forgotten, that the dear tie you name is fortunately dissolved, that we may cement one yet  
more

more endearing? Ah, Livy! is it possible I could exist under the idea of a future separation? No—we will still love, and still live for each other alone.”

—Here starting up with enthusiastic emotion, he knelt on the grave, and holding her hand eagerly in his——

“ I swear (cried he) by the dear venerable dust that this hallowed turf conceals, never to cherish the idea of any other woman, but my Olivia.—Let us join our mutual vows, my sweet sister, and thus defy fortune to divide us.”

“ I join (returned she, kneeling also) —never will I marry any man, but Theodore.”

“ I am sure (exclaimed Theodore) our vow gratifies the gentle spirits of our departed friends—let us hasten to

the good St. Leger, and entreat him to ratify it by the holy rites of marriage."

When they arrived at the rectory, Mr. St. Leger was surprized at observing an unusual emotion in the faces of both; but he was much more so, when Theodore importunately desired him to perform the marriage ceremony, adding, that as the relation which had hitherto been delightful to both, could not be realized, Olivia and himself had resolved to form one yet more tender.

Mr. St. Leger had in reality expected something of this kind. The affection which from infancy had subsisted between them, was, he ever thought, far more lively and sentimental, than that  
which

which the fraternal relation commonly inspires; and when informed by Margaret, that no degree of consanguinity actually held them, he was led to expect a more tender avowal of attachment; but he could by no means accede to their present proposal. “There are many reasons (said he) which render it expedient for me to repress this inexperienced ardour, although, my dearest children, I can perceive nothing but what is extremely natural and laudable, in this your reciprocal affection; and I own, it will afford me the purest pleasure one day, to unite you. I love you both with the extreme of tenderness, and must confess, that with respect to you, Theodore, I am not wholly devoid of ambition. I would see you all, which the baron’s generosity puts it in your power to become. Now, consider both  
of

of you, my children, how fatal an interruption this measure, which the warmth of youth has suggested, would prove to his views and your future welfare. I own, I cannot conscientiously be an accomplice in the plan."

Neither of the lovers saw any thing very conclusive in the argument which St. Leger had addressed to them : yet accustomed to pay the greatest deference to his sentiments, they felt themselves incapable of acting in direct opposition thereto ; and therefore, having obtained not only his consent, but his warmest approbation of their union, at some future period, they implicitly acquiesced in his opinion.

It was not till time had somewhat moderated the keen sense of anguish,  
occa-

occasioned by Margaret's death, that Olivia thought of examining the contents of the trunk which she had bequeathed to her. When she opened it, the following articles appeared, viz. a tablet or pocket-book, richly wrought with gold, remarkable by the cyphers, G B - H B, embroidered on the inside—a diamond ring of great value, with the letters G B engraved in cypher on the inside—and a pocket handkerchief of very fine cambric. The nature of the articles induced Mr. St. Leger to conclude Olivia of no mean extraction, though the possibility of ever attaining to the knowledge of her family, seemed totally beyond the verge of rational expectation——nor was he occasionally satisfied, after this, of the propriety of matching her with Theodore, who,  
doubt-

doubtless, was the illegitimate son of the peasant William—but virtue, in his opinion, afforded the only distinction which it becomes a rational creature to emulate, and therefore a scruple of that kind could not long be seriously indulged.



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CHAP. VII.  

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AS Mr. St. Leger was much averse to the launching youth into the world, before their best principles should have had time to take proper root in the mind, he had seldom mentioned the military school ; and in fact, the baron made him another visit, before any active measures had been thought on for the forwarding the plan which his lordship had formerly devised. Lady Edith, who at this time accompanied the baron, her father, was  
agree-

RANSPACH.

agreeably surprized at the presence of Theodore and Olivia: she deemed them two of the most finished productions of nature, and wondered how it was possible, for the rude mountains of Wales to nourish so much beauty and perfection, as she beheld in those young persons, who, ignorant of the science of disguising the emotions of the heart, addressed her ladyship with modest frankness and natural dignity. If in Olivia's person, she perceived beauty superior to her own, she felt at the same time that unstudied sweetness, which checked the malignant risings of envy; while in Theodore, unadorned by art, untutored in the language of compliment, she beheld those manly charms—that irresistible grace, which compelled her to think him the most lovely youth she had ever seen: nor could she forbear

bear expressing surprize at meeting with persons so much superior to what, from the rusticity of the country, she had been led to expect.

“ You ought not to wonder, madam, (said St. Leger, gratified by the praises bestowed on his beloved pupils) if nature sometimes deviates from her plan, and bestows the graces of a court, where nobody would think of looking for them.”

“ Of a court ! (reiterated the baron, and shook his head.) Nature forms no courtiers, nor courtly excellence : our modes of life—our graces—nay, even our virtues, are artificial there. Ah ! would that our miseries were so likewise.”

Lady Edith was nearly of Olivia's age—her person was rather agreeable than handsome; it was, however, rendered extremely interesting, by that strong expression of beneficence, which animated every feature, and that winning sweetness of manners, which could scarcely fail of conciliating esteem and affection: her temper rather inclined to the pensive—susceptible of the liveliest impressions, yet warm and stedfast in its attachments. But while she copied the engaging affability of her father, she was not without some portion of that pride, which rendered her mother generally disgusting—we mean those prejudices peculiar to superior rank, which springing immediately from the feudal system, teach the possessor to look on the subordinate classes of mankind, as beings of an inferior order. In lady Edith, those  
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opinions, which all the baron's endeavours could not wholly extirpate, seemed modelled so as really to subserve the purpose of virtue. She did, indeed, conceive herself to be sprung from a race, privileged and exalted above the mass of mankind; but the consciousness of such superiority continually stimulated her mind to generosity, integrity, and those kindred qualities, which denote a great and noble soul. In the cottage-bred Olivia, she had discernment enough to discriminate many excellencies of character, that claimed the homage of her heart: to raise the merit which she loved from obscurity, would be an act of justice, as the society of Olivia must ever prove a source of delicate and refined satisfaction. Under the influence of this new, yet ardent affection, lady Edith had actually devised

the means of preventing a separation.  
“Olivia (said she)—will you not quit this rustic situation, and render your friend more happy than she would know how to express?—say you will go with me to London, and thus cement a friendship which shall never end, but with our lives.”

“Ah! dear lady Edith—would you advise me thus to abandon the man, who has so long proved more than a father to me?—or do you suspect me capable of such ingratitude, as to desert, in old age, the very friend who has fostered my youth?”

“No, dearest Livy—by no means would I have you do this—I mean (hesitating)—I mean when this valuable friend shall be no more.”

Olivia

Olivia instantly bursting into tears, obliged lady Edith to regret, that she had dropped so painful a hint. Mr. St. Leger had, it was true, a consumptive aspect; and to those constantly accustomed to behold it, the gradual advances of inward decay were not so apparent, as to those who saw him seldom. The baron had privately observed to his daughter, that Mr. St. Leger looked much worse than when he last saw him; and with the most heart-felt sorrow, he was convinced, that life with him was almost at its verge. These hints had prompted lady Edith to extort from her friend, a promise of taking shelter with her, in case of Mr. St. Leger's dissolution, which all but Theodore and Olivia, were satisfied could be at no long distance. This, in fact, she accomplished before they parted; but

the subject could be but slightly intimated—Olivia perceived not the danger of her patron, and fain would flatter herself, that it did not exist.

This persuasion, however, induced the baron to hasten the departure of Theodore, which occasioned a very tender scene between the young lovers, who, prompted by similar feelings, met one evening at the grotto, where they had passed many a sweet hour of harmony.

“Alas ! (cried Theodore, sighing)—do you not observe, Olivia, what a melancholy oppresses all nature !—the blast blows hollow, and this rill, whose murmurs we used to admire, seems to mutter an unpleasant foreboding.—When shall we meet at this sweet spot again ?”

“Never

"Never (replied she with tears)—never, Theodore, shall we more watch the red setting sun from this eminence, as we have a thousand times done together. Ah! this is the last time."

The countenance of Theodore, which before had worn a settled pensiveness, now flushed with quick emotion—he seized her hand with eagerness, and exclaimed, "Where is the necessity of parting?—why must I quit these dear shades, where every spot brings some sweet idea back to memory?—why quit them, to pursue an *ignus fatuus*—a phantom, which can never realize the peace we have till now enjoyed, Olivia?—we will not part."

"Never—never" reiterated both with one voice."

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At that moment Mr. St. Leger, who had been indulging in the pleasure of meditation, not far from thence, came towards them, and with a look of dissatisfaction, and cutting irony, said—  
“You have formed an heroic resolution—a resolution worthy of yourselves, and honourable to the principles which I have been anxious to ingraft in your minds.”

Both looked abashed, and were silent. Mr. St. Leger thus resumed: “Does it become the purity of the passion you profess, Theodore, to waste the prime of life in an inglorious obscurity, basely neglectful of those opportunities which await to crown you with glory and competence?—or is it thus, Olivia, you reward his affection, by seducing him from the path of honour, and rendering him unworthy

unworthy the esteem of the good and wise?"

"Ah! spare me (cried she, weeping)—spare these just reproaches; nor compel me to feel my own weakness still more deeply."

"You own me in the right, then, my poor child—and Theodore—what says he?"

"My reason (answered he) compels me to justify your reproaches, while my inclination would condemn them."

Mr. St. Leger, with a smile, embraced them both, and added, "I need not say which it becomes a wise man to obey, Theodore—or (looking on Olivia) a woman of delicacy and honour to approve."

"I will

“ I will go from hence to-morrow (resumed Theodore, firmly)—but may I entreat one precious token of your paternal kindness, ere we part?”

“ Why entreat, my boy, what you ever may command?—speak your wish.”

“ Theodore, taking Olivia's hand, knelt before the good man, and answered, “ Let your pious benediction, Oh! my beloved benefactor, light on our plighted faith—bless the affection which has been nourished in strict conformity to the purest virtue.”

“ I do bless it (cried St. Leger, affected). Oh! my children, be ye blessed in your mutual tenderness—be ye one—and may your happiness, present and to come, be secure. It will be so, while truth and virtue hold the first place in your bosoms.”

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He then tenderly raised them, and they entered the house together, where it was impossible to conceal from the penetrating eye of lady Edith, those traces of tender sensibility, which yet glistened on the cheeks of the lovers: but as her ladyship supposed them to be really brother and sister, from their still applying those endearing appellations to each other, she imagined it an effect of that chagrin, which such a relation would naturally enough experience on a first separation, and therefore attempted to dissipate the pensiveness of Olivia, by observing, that she could not always expect to enjoy the society of her brother.

—"He must form new connections."—Her ladyship had no sooner uttered that expression, than she felt her face in a glow—she stopped—looked a little embarrassed, and then resumed—"Your brother

brother is a charming creature, Livy—I could almost wish myself a peasant for his sake.” Here she blushed, yet deeper; but Olivia, absorpt in her own reflections, did not observe her embarrassment.

The time which the baron had allotted for his stay in Wales, being now expired, he proposed to make some digression in his return to England, with a view of conducting his protegee to the military academy, at which he had predetermined to place him. On the morning of departure, the separation was on all sides affecting; but respecting Theodore and the venerable pastor, more tender than might have been expected from the habitual firmness of the latter. The truth was—Mr. St. Leger, who had long been sensible of an inward decline, experienced

perienced from that consciousness, a sensation unknown to him before—he was about to part from a youth, whom he tenderly loved, for whose future happiness he had a paternal anxiety; and he felt, that the adieu now pronounced would prove the final one. A few moments before the carriage drew up, he took him aside, and wiping off those tears which he fain would conceal, thus addressed him :—“ I know not, my dearest Theodore, how long it may be, ere we meet again, or if ever we may meet more on earth; but I charge you, in all events of your future life, to cherish the precepts which, from time to time, you have received from me—they are those of a friend, and may be valuable, when you find few that love you well enough to deal sincerely in the reprehension of your faults. Preserve the

letters which, while I live, I shall continue to write to you ; read them frequently, and imagine you hear me addressing you from the tomb. Above all, cultivate a taste for pure rational devotion—this shall exalt every enjoyment, and sustain your soul under every pressure of calamity. And, Oh ! my Theodore, remember, that the best way of honouring my memory, is to adhere to my counsels." Here the good man held him some minutes in a strenuous embrace, and then, as if conscious of a weakness he ought not longer to indulge, he seized the weeping Olivia by the hand, and with her, retired hastily into the house, while the carriage with the baron, his daughter, and adopted son, moved off.

Olivia, thus deprived of an object,

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on whom her earliest ideas had been fixed—the companion of her infancy, childhood, and youth—the associate of her little plans—the confidant of her joys or sorrows—in a word, her other self—felt a void in her breast, which rendered every scene tasteless and joyless. Her natural good understanding, and strength of mind, aided by the conversations of Mr. St. Leger, would probably have enabled her to conquer this effect of refined sensibility ; but unhappily for her, the suggestion of lady Edith was too soon realized, and she herself could no longer be insensible of the ill health of her beloved patron ; or rather, he himself no longer deemed it necessary to conceal from her those symptoms of decline, he had long been sensible of, but which he had flattered himself, were not so fatal in their consequences, as he

now apprehended them to be. Olivia, unwearied in her duteous attentions, felt every concern of her heart swallowed up in the pious solicitude which she endured on his account. "How soothing to my heart (cried he) are these amiable sympathies, my sweet Olivia—but be not alarmed—I may yet recover, and I wish to do so for your sake, and that of Theodore:—perhaps the keen air of these mountains may be unfriendly to a valedudinarian; and as you have often heard me speak of a sister I have at Bareges, I have some inclination to try what those waters, together with change of air, might do for me. With so sweet a companion, I shall not feel the journey very inconvenient."

Olivia, gathering the most flattering hopes from the salubrity of the air and  
waters,

waters, rejoiced to hear him propose a visit to the continent ; and with the utmost alacrity, set herself to prepare every thing for the journey, which she trusted, was to restore to her only benefactor, that health which had been a blessing to her, and to thousands around him. In a short time all was ready, and the day of departure fixed ; the parishioners assembling round the door of their beloved pastor, poured out their united prayers for his safety and health. He gave them his parting benediction with solemnity and unfeigned affection.—“ Prepare, my children (said he) to meet your pastor in a better country—if no more on earth.” His voice was scarcely articulate—he waved his hand to all around, and got into the chaise, followed by their tears.



## CHAP. VIII.

THE wind fortunately favourable, our travellers found as expeditious and easy a passage across the channel, as could have been desired. Mr. St. Leger, whose serenity of soul no circumstances could disturb, landed in good spirits, and without feeling that excessive fatigue which the delicate frame of Olivia sensibly experienced. At length they reached Bareges, where Madam Les-trange received her brother with the greatest

greatest cordiality, and Olivia, as his favourite, with equal civility.— This lady was a widow, of about forty, who lived in easy circumstances, on an annuity bequeathed her by her late husband : the income was sufficient to enable her to make a handsome appearance, entertain the best company, and, in short, to procure her both comfort and felicity—but with every means in her power, Madam Lestrangle was neither happy in herself, or beloved by others ; her character in every respect, was the reverse of that of her brother : to an uncultivated understanding, she joined a heart, callous to all the finer feelings of humanity, and a temper, sordid and severe : with such dispositions, she neither sought or obtained any valuable friendships ; she was visited indeed by a numerous acquaintance, which her easy circum-

circumstances enabled her to support ; few of them, however, were to the taste of Mr. St. Leger, who, amidst the inundation of unmeaning conversations, which now incessantly poured upon him, soon began to regret the tranquil pleasures, the rational enjoyments, which he had left at his beloved rectory ; nor could the general respect, with which he was treated by the whole dissipated circle, in the least atone for the sacrifice. —It was universally imagined, that he possessed that unfailing passport to the world's good opinion—riches ; and Madam Lestranger, not only favoured the notion, but actually believed it ; though the only grounds she could have for such an idea, was by concluding, that he had, through life, practised the same sordid parsimony which had characterized herself. Fallacious as the opinion

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certainly was, it tended to secure him those seeming cordialities, which the tie of consanguinity alone could not have extorted from her.

After a residence of near six months at Bareges, Mr. St. Leger was convinced, that it would be in vain to expect that restoration of health, which he had vainly sought. Olivia had often importuned him to try a more southern climate, to which he had hitherto been averse, but at length replied to her persuasions: "For my own sake, Olivia, I scarcely think the poor remains of life deserving such solicitude; but on your account, I would, if possible, lengthen out the span—we will go, my child, to the south of France." But alas! the resolution was formed too late—he was now become too far exhausted, to undertake

dertake the journey, and Olivia saw, with ineffable anguish, that the last hours of her only benefactor drew on with irresistible rapidity. He was, shortly afterwards, unable to quit his chamber, where she constantly attended him with unremitting tenderness, struggling with her own excruciating feelings, lest they should painfully affect those of her paternal friend. Madam Lestrangle abated nothing of her usual gaiety; her house was not less the scene of noise and company; and she seemed to think a formal ten minutes, daily passed in the apartment of a dying brother, was as strong a proof of concern and affection, as nature and decency could require. Olivia was shocked at her insensibility, and a glow of warm indignation would sometimes flush those cheeks which were incessantly wetted by the tears of fond affection:

but,

but, as in circumstances like those, the feeling attentions of even common acquaintance are precious, she felt gratefully sensible of the notice of two persons, who only, of all Madam Les-trange's numerous visitors, discovered any consideration of her distressed situation. These were the Count and Madam de Blore, in whose sentiments Mr. St. Leger had discovered something analogous to his own, and consequently with whose society he was capable of being gratified. They were now his frequent visitors, and both expressed and felt those tender sympathies, which are ever dear to the feeling heart: as their chateau was scarcely a league from Bareges, they wished the amiable invalid to take advantage of its retirement; but St. Leger had now done with the world, and convinced that he must speedily

dily quit it for ever, had entirely composed himself to meet the awful hour with a fortitude, which a life like his might well inspire. One day, as Olivia fondly hung over his pillow, he grasped her hand with paternal eagerness, and thus spoke :

“ My departure must necessarily leave you in unpleasant circumstances, my most dear Olivia ; and for your sake I alone desire life—but it cannot be—and you, my poor girl, must arm your virtuous mind with fortitude, for an event, which I feel to be near at hand. Remember, that our separation must at some time have taken place, and since the present is the appointed time, rest assured that it is the best, though to shortsighted reason, it may seem otherwise. Allow me, while I am capable, to render  
you

you the best service in my power, by directing, in some measure, your future conduct ; and here I must advert to your immediate situation, when I cease to exist.

My sister, I fear, has not abilities to value the merit of my Olivia, as I could wish—we must look elsewhere for an effectual friend—a cordial asylum—and here the kindness of Lady Edith Ranspach comfortably presents itself to my recollection :—she loves you, Olivia,—the Baron is good and generous—they will receive you with sincere good-will—the rest of the family I know nothing of—but whatever their dispositions may be, the patronage of the baron, and the friendship of his daughter, will be sufficient to secure you a comfortable retreat.”

This effort of discourse seemed to have exhausted him—he paused. Olivia, with trembling hands, smoothed his pillow, and he fell into a gentle slumber, which continued about an hour, when he awoke apparently refreshed: she then presented him a jelly, of which he swallowed a few drops, and desiring she would raise him a little in the bed, thus resumed his last address:—"In my will, which will be found in the trunk, I have bequeathed our dear Theodore, my library and philosophical apparatus—whatever may arise from the sale of effects at the rectory, must be equally the property of you both—my watch you will present to him, as a small token of my love—and this ring (here he drew one from his finger)—this ring I bestow on my beloved Olivia." She knelt at the bed-side—kissed the precious pledge

pledge, and placed it next her heart, with such a look of tenderness and woe, as grieved the departing saint. He then composed himself to mental prayer, and the sweet beams of heavenly felicity played on his venerable countenance. In about a quarter of an hour he appeared wrapped in tranquil sleep—but it was the sleep of death—his gentle spirit was flown to those blessed regions, for which a life of active virtue had abundantly prepared him, and where those sublime pleasures awaited, to which his pious soul had long been attuned.





## CHAP. IX.

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**SCARCELY** were the remains of the excellent St. Leger committed to the hallowed dust, when Madam Lestrange began to examine his trunks, with an eagerness which her avarice could alone inspire. To her entire chagrin and disappointment, she discovered, that he had left no larger sum than the one which his portmanteau before her contained; and this, indeed, was little more than sufficient to defray the funeral expences.

pences. This she greedily seized ; then turning to Olivia, who sat absorbed in anguish by the bed, on which her adored patron had breathed his last, she cried with indecent indignation—"What unpardonable folly!—unsufferable prodigality!—with an income, which I well know, far exceeded his necessary expenditure, could not my weak brother have had the prudence to lay up some little fund!"

"Alas! (returned Olivia, inexpressibly hurt)—the benevolent Mr. St. Leger admitted many claimants on his beneficence."

"You for one, I think (with an air of disdain)----it appears to me, however, that charity should begin at home."—Perceiving the poor girl ready to sink under this unmerited severity, she a little

softened her tone, and resumed—"I did not mean to reproach you, child—doubtless, if my brother was weak enough to throw away a fortune on strangers, one cannot blame them for picking it up :—all I say is, that I am not of his mind."

"There needed not such a declaration, madam—nor did I mean to put your goodness to the trial, longer than I shall be enabled to acquaint my friends of my situation."

"You have friends, then—my brother, I think, used to say you had none. Well, I am glad of it, as I assure you, it is not in my power to support you. Alas! I am but a poor widow: had my brother left me a fortune, it would have been quite another thing—you must not expect to find me such another as himself, child."

"I do

“ I do not indeed expect it (cried Olivia emphatically.)—all I entreat is, an asylum beneath your roof, till heaven provides me a friend.”

“ Ah! child—friends, let me tell you, are rather scarce, and it may be some time before you find one to your mind—however, I am not going to turn you out of doors at present—you may stay here a week or two; and, let me tell you, that is more than you have a right to expect, considering how ill I have been treated by my brother.”

“ Impossible! (exclaimed Olivia, hurt at the unjust insinuation)—Mr. St. Leger could never behave ill to any one.”

“ Why, how now, my pert mistress!—what! I warrant you thought him an angel; and so to be sure you had reason—

son—however, I think it was using me extremely ill, to spend, what he ought to have saved for a sister, on such a minx as you are.”

Here she flung herself out of the room in much heat—presently after, the Count and Madam de Blore drove up to the door—after sitting some time in the parlour, they requested leave to pay their respects to Olivia. Madam Le-strange abruptly rang a bell, and ordered a servant to tell the young woman above stairs, to step down into the parlour. Olivia replied, that she could not see company ; but on being told who the visitors were, she immediately went down, and was met at her entrance by Madam de Blore. “ I was anxious to see you, my dear (said that lady)—but if company is not at this time agreeable to you,

you, I wave the pleasure I meant to enjoy, and entreat you will stay with us no longer, than suits your own inclination—we will see you some other time.”

A behaviour, so full of sweetness and delicacy, contrasted with the unfeeling asperity of Madam Lestrange, affected the unfortunate girl too sensibly for immediate acknowledgment—she pressed the hand of Madam de Blore in silence, but not without a strong expression of sensibility in her countenance—curtised, and retired to her room. As soon as she was gone, Madam de Blore said, “I have a violent curiosity to know something more of this young person—pray, my dear Lestrange, who and what is she?”

“Not at all worth your curiosity (replied the other)—I know only, that she  
is

is a low-born peasant, whom my brother brought up and educated—his foible, poor man, was charity.”

The count smiled, and observed, that it was the first time he had heard charity reckoned among the infirmities of human nature.

Madam Lestrangle justified her expression, by alledging, that when a person bestowed on strangers the fortune, which should be reserved for relatives, the quality was no better than a foible.

“ But if the stranger needs the assistance, and relatives do not—what will you call it then ?”

“ Little better than folly (answered she) since, in my opinion, the girl is injured, rather than benefited, by my brother’s

ther's notice of her : had he left her in the mean condition he found her, she would have been fitted for a humble occupation ; instead of which, by education, as he termed it, he has raised her ideas much above the condition in which she is now left."

" There may be something in that (said Madam de Blore)—nevertheless, the young woman is on that very account entitled to every tender consideration, and must be treated with peculiar delicacy."

Madam Lestrangle, not at all comprehending the force of this remark, returned no other answer than a smile of contempt. After a short desultory conversation, the two visitors took their leave—during their stay, Olivia had been occupied by very distressing reflections  
on

on the nature of her situation—for the first time in her life, she had been made to feel the misery of dependance—an honest pride spurned the idea. “ Shall I (said she to herself) be a mean solicitor of charity, when it is in my power to procure a subsistence by industry?—what hinders me from engaging the interest of Madam de Blore, towards procuring a servitude, or at least employment at the needle? ”—but here the fond idea of Theodore rushed on her mind, and she reflected, that by staying on the continent, every opportunity of seeing him must be precluded. Why should she not rather apply for lady Edith’s recommendation in England, especially, since Mr. St. Leger had exhorted her to have recourse to the friendship of that family. After some time spent in meditations of this nature, she took up her pen to  
write

write to Theodore, but felt herself embarrassed, as to the nature of the communication proper for the occasion. Should she acknowledge the unkindness of Madam Lestrangle, and confess, that a few marks which Mr. St Leger's bounty had supplied her with, was all the resource she had, either for subsisting in a distant country, or for a return to Britain; she knew the ardour of his temper would urge him to risk every personal consideration, and produce his immediate presence at Bareges. Satisfactory as such an incident would prove to herself, for his sake she ought to prevent it, and therefore at length composed her epistle, in which she informed him of Mr. St Leger's decease, and briefly added, that she should remain with Madam Lestrangle till Lady Edith could be informed of the sad event. To that lady she also wrote with

a freedom, which friendship warranted, but at the same time, with that delicacy, which a refined mind would experience on such an occasion.

She had scarcely finished her letters, when Madam Lesrange entered the chamber. I suppose (said she) you have been writing to the friends you mentioned—it is well done—but I can put you in a way of doing without their assistance. You recollect Monsieur Barre, no doubt—he is rich, and likes you—but what is more, he will marry you.”

Olivia remembered to have seen this person among the many others who visited at the house, but did not recollect him with any complacency, and therefore coolly replied, that she could only  
return

return his good opinion by her thanks. Madam Lestrangle, astonished at an indifference which she had little expected, was displeased, and proceeded largely to expatiate on the wealth, connections, and amazing condescension of Monsieur Barre; which, in order to divert, Olivia briefly declared herself engaged.

“A pretty answer (cried the other in great wrath) for one in your situation to return to such a man as Monsieur Barre—but, I believe, I can fathom your scheme, and therefore must tell you, that you are either to accept this most gracious offer, or quit my house within two days.”

“Alas! whither can I go! (exclaimed Olivia, weeping)—who will open their doors to a poor friendless stranger?”

“Who, indeed? (reiterated madam)

—but I am positive in my determination, and will leave you to resolve on your measures.”

Olivia now threw herself on the bed, where lately she had kissed the cold corpse of St. Leger, and as though she saw his gentle shade, exclaimed, “Why, Oh! best of human beings, have you left no portion of your virtues with her who calls you brother? Ah! resume not yet your seat among the blest, till your poor Olivia has wept out the residue of a hated life, and quitted an unfeeling world, where never—never can she look for goodness such as yours: hover over me, angelic spirit, and breathe that fortitude which may enable me to brave poverty and death, rather than renounce my Theodore. Did not your pious lips consecrate our mutual affection?”

Olivia

Olivia may, and soon she must, become the homeless child of sorrow ; but she will preserve inviolate those vows, which you, Oh ! honoured saint, approved and blest."

Sometime on the following day, Madam de Blore came again in her carriage, and with the endearing familiarity of friendship, she moved directly to the chamber, in which Olivia spent most of her gloomy hours. She found her, as usual, in tears, but every way an object calculated to interest the best feelings of the heart—her countenance pale with grief, expressive of the anguish which flows, not from instinctive sensation, but high-wrought sensibility : a sash of black crape (the only vestige of mourning which her poverty allowed) tied her loose robe of muslin, while negligent of the

arts of dress, she had suffered her beautiful ringlets of dark brown hair to wanton dishevelled over her graceful shoulders.

“ Olivia, my love (said Madam de Blore in a voice of sweetness) I have been thinking, that a change of scenes may do you good. I come to tear you from the solitary indulgence of an amiable, though fruitless grief, and to convey you to the chateau, where the count my brother longs to bid you welcome.”

Almost any place was, in Olivia's esteem, preferable to the cold inhospitable roof of Madam Lestranger: but to be permitted to pass the time of her stay on the continent, with so excellent a person as Madam de Blore, was a felicity which she could not have expected her

her rigid fate had prepared for her, and therefore she accepted the invitation with grateful readiness: nor did Madam Le-strange affect to conceal the pleasure she felt, on being thus relieved of a person, who, she began to fear, would for some time prove such an incumbrance, as she could not with decency shake off.





## CHAP. X.

THE Count and Madam de Blore were brother and sister; they were neither of them under fifty years of age; the count, however, was the oldest of the two. Blest with good health, and constant serenity of mind, they still retained all the chearfulness of youth, and preserving an uninterrupted harmony with each other, their house was the residence of peace and social enjoyment. As their fortune was ample, every thing  
around.

around them wore the marks of splendor and hospitality; there was scarcely a domestic of the family, who had not passed the largest part of life in their service; content animated every countenance, as a reverential affection prompted every act of attention and obedience. Such was the family with which Olivia was now to make a temporary residence; and her transition from the grudging table of avarice and inhumanity, to that of liberal beneficence and cordial kindness, caused her spirits somewhat to revive; and though far from cheerful, she gradually became tranquil and resigned. The chateau, built on an eminence, commanded a fine extensive view, a considerable part of which comprized the ample domain of the court; the park and gardens were laid out in the most agreeable taste; groves, lawns, and  
mean-

meandering rivulets, formed such variety of delightful walks, that Olivia, wandering about them, would on some occasions lose the painful consciousness of her condition, and almost fancy those happy hours returned, when with Theodore, the companion of her youth, or the good St. Leger, their mutual benefactor, she had contemplated the lovely scenes of rural nature, with a delight resulting from mental refinement, and unalloyed by anxiety or sorrow.

About the third day of her residence in this charming family, the Count de Blore assumed a freedom, which he had not done before, of enquiring into the nature of her connections with the family of Ranspach. In return to the answer she made, he replied, "I find nothing in your information, dearest Olivia, to  
check

check the agreeable expectations which my sister and I have indulged respecting you. The attachment of Lady Edith seems neither of long establishment, or tried stability : I will therefore venture to declare our joint wishes, that you will permit us to adopt you as our daughter. We have both long since discarded the idea of marriage, during our several lives ; you will therefore comprize the whole of our affection, and at our death, shall find yourself considered as a child of the family." Pleasure, gratitude, and surprize, pressing at once on the susceptible heart of Olivia, totally suspended the powers of articulation, and while she laboured for expression adequate to her feelings, Madam de Blore added, " Do not, my love, conclude that the nature of your situation is that alone which prompts our attach-

attachment to you ; from the first moment of our being acquainted, you have been dear to us ; for which, indeed, it is not easy to account, except we allow the force of virtue and real merit, over the affections of all who have accustomed themselves to respect it."

" Oh ! madam (cried Olivia)—how does this charming delicacy mortify, even while it exalts me in my own idea ! And do you then imagine me too proud to owe this astonishing condescension to humanity alone ?"

" My sister (rejoined the count) had not any thing of this in her thoughts, my dear. However an estimate of your situation might weigh with you, in accepting our sincere invitation, I assure you, it was but a secondary motive with us in offering it. Say then, that you will never leave us."

" Ah !

“ Ah! my lord, with what alacrity and gratitude would my affirmative be given, were I at liberty to follow the dictates of inclination alone.”

“ And who, my dear, can controul them?”

“ One, madam, whose counsels must be sacred with me—the good, the benevolent Mr. St. Leger. He, on his death-bed, enjoined me to implore protection of the baron and his amiable daughter. But for this, a menial situation within this dear mansion, were a felicity too vast for acknowledgment.”

“ You are doubtless right, Olivia, in setting a sacred value on the injunctions of that most excellent man—yet I must suppose, that had he foreseen an asylum for his beloved protogee so near at hand, he would have wished her to embrace it.”

"I cannot question this, my lord: nay more—his dying lips would have moved in gratitude for so unlooked for kindness. True—the advice he gave was dictated by a painful sense of impending circumstances; yet I feel myself impelled, by a sort of superstitious reverence, to regard it with minute exactness. Oh! think me neither unhumbled nor capricious, my honoured worthy friends—yet had I rather suffer by mistaken judgment of my feelings, than actually to violate my sacred obligations to the memory of that revered benefactor."

Madam de Blore caught her tenderly in her arms and replied, with warmth of approbation—"How greatly do I admire the principles which dictate such sentiments as these!—no, my dear child, you must not infringe those pious obligations

gations—it is our infelicity not to have expressed our wishes to Mr. St. Leger himself—as it is, you must, I think, go to Lady Edith—but surely it will be sufficient that you go merely as a visitor, and return, after a temporary absence, to this place, as to your paternal home.”

“ This (added the Count) you may promise in entire consistency with the obligation you have named.”

Olivia, in reply to such singular and unexpected generosity, could only drop on her knees, bathing a hand of each noble friend with tears of transport and affection. It was, in fine, determined, that she should comply with the invitation, which it was expected Lady Edith's letter would not fail to contain; that if the baroness, whom she did not even personally know, should not regard her

with complacency, her stay in England would be short, and she should, without delay, return to the chateau de Blore. A heart corroded by sorrow, and repeatedly pierced by the disdainful inhumanity of Madam Lestrange, could not presently support an unexpected tide of satisfaction. Scarcely had she reached her apartment, when she sunk into a chair, and fainted. Fortunately, Agatha, the housekeeper, was at hand, whose ready assistance soon restored her to life, after which she conducted her for air to the balcony. Having sat some time, admiring one of the loveliest views in nature, they returned together through the gallery. Agatha, having occasion to fetch something from an apartment, which appeared merely a receptacle of lumber, Olivia also entered, but had not advanced far into the room, when she

she started, and uttered an involuntary scream. The fact was, that in this desolate and neglected place, hung a picture, exactly resembling that which she had so much admired in the old castle formerly mentioned. — “ Mon dieu, mam’selle, what is it surprizes you ? ” — Olivia, having the miniature of the same person about her, now took it out, and comparing it with the portrait, was astonished at the exact resemblance between them. She eagerly demanded of the housekeeper, who the portrait before them represented.

“ Indeed, mam’selle, I don’t know. Here, in this very place, it lay, when I first came to live in the family, which is now twenty years ago.”

“ It is a pity, Agatha, that it should have been left in a state of neglect.”

“So it is, mam’selle—But pray, have you seen the picture, which they say, is so much like you?”

“Like me! Agatha.”

“Oh! the most in the world, I am sure. Did you not know, that my lord and lady took a liking to you, because you were so much like that picture I mentioned.”

Agatha, as she continued her discourse, advanced to the saloon, around which hung several portraits of the family. Pointing to a lady habited in blue, she said, “That, mam’selle, is your resemblance, and vastly like it is—but she seems not to have been as old as you, when drawn.”

“And whose portrait is it?”

“The

“The young lady was sister to the count, and he was particularly fond of her.—A sweet creature it was—but I never knew her.”

“How long has she been dead?”

“About eighteen years, mam’selle.”

“Eighteen years” (reiterated Olivia, musing.) A strange, yet pleasing idea, flitted across her brain. “Was the lady a mother, Agatha?”

“She was, mam’selle.”

Olivia’s pulse beat quicker, and her whole frame was sensibly agitated.—Agatha, without observing her emotion, went on—“The lady’s husband and child died, after which she retired to a convent, where she ended her days.”

“Ah! (cried Olivia, in a tone of chagrin)—died in a convent!—are you quite sure of this?”

“There

“ There can be no doubt of that, mam’selle—every body knows that the count’s sister died in a convent—and if you please, I can show you the spot where she is buried.”

“ It is unnecessary,” answered Olivia. The housekeeper then left her, and for some minutes she found herself unable to collect her fluttered thoughts ; but at length she could not but smile at the retrospect of what had lately passed within her breast, and the eagerness with which she had yielded herself to the sportive power of imagination. To divert her thoughts from an unpleasant review, she stole back again to the lumber-room, in order to take another view of the neglected picture :—the more intently she examined it, the more fully she was convinced of its resemblance to one she had seen in the dilapidated castle of Ranspach

pach—she was almost persuaded, they were both intended to portray the same person—but why it should have a place in the chateau de Blore, where the name of Ranspach was unknown, appeared a most unaccountable circumstance.—Once she ventured to mention the picture which she had seen, to Madam de Blore, but that lady returned so slight an answer, as prevented her from indulging any farther curiosity on the subject; though, during her stay at the chateau, she often went, unobserved, to that apartment, feeling a pleasing emotion in contemplating the portrait, tho' unable to account to herself why she did so.

After a couple of months passed as pleasantly as friendship itself could render them, a letter arrived from Lady Edith,

Edith, who, expressing herself in the most affectionate manner, conjured Olivia to set out immediately for England; and a postscript in the baron's own hand, assured her of the warmest reception. Olivia went with the letter open in her hand to Madam de Blore's dressing-room—"And now (said she) my dearest madam, allow me to avail myself of your unmerited goodness, by submitting my determination in this matter to your direction. You have (added she, weeping from an impulse of gratitude)—you have adopted the poor friendless stranger, and it is you that must order her future conduct."

Madam de Blore tenderly embracing her, replied—"By this reference, dearest Olivia, you compel me to give judgment against my fondest wishes—all things

things considered, I think you must not decline Lady Edith's friendship—but let us consult the count."

She then put Olivia's arm within her own, and they went into the garden to the count, who after perusing the letter, observed, that it contained every indication of sincerity and friendship. "I trust, however (added he, looking kindly on Olivia) we shall not long be deprived of the society of our sweet companion."

"Ah! my dear lord (returned she)—allow me to show, in some little measure, the sense I have of your goodness, by requesting you to prescribe the duration of my stay in England."

"Why this (he resumed) is the sweet language of adoption—but, my dear  
Olivia,

Olivia, you must not imagine, that by consenting to become our child, you forfeit your liberty. No—your pleasure, rather than ours, shall determine this point. All I demand is, a promise of returning to us, the moment you perceive any cause of dissatisfaction elsewhere."

"Promise! (reiterated the grateful girl)—rather let me thus on my knees thank you, and this dear lady, for the generous permission of returning to this sweet asylum."





## CHAP. XI.

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**T**HE generous family of De Blorc could not suffer the fair fugitive to quit their friendly mansion, without liberally providing for her proper accommodation on her journey. Both the count and madam conducted her in their own coach to Harfleur, and there took a most affectionate leave with tears, which neither could restrain: they remained on the beach, till the vessel in which Olivia had embarked, was lost to the

eye, while she, weeping on the deck, repayed those benevolent attentions with the liveliest effusions of love, gratitude, and tender regret. At Dover, the Baron Ranspach, with Lady Edith, awaited her landing—they received her in the most cordial manner—but while their affection poured balm on her depressed spirits, the presence of these respectable personages excited in her breast a train of melancholy ideas. She reflected, that the last time of her beholding them, was in the beloved society of that dear friend, whose death she could not cease to lament—the excursions they had made together—their conversation, and even the words he had uttered on various occasions, rushed on her memory, and with a look of tender recollection, she pronounced the honoured name of St. Leger. The Baron and Lady Edith, com-  
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prehending the nature of her feelings, joined by sympathetic tears in a tribute of esteem to his memory. "Whilst we laudibly encourage (said the former) the virtuous energies of social affection, let us not forget, dear Olivia, that the friends we mourn are but gone before us, on a journey which we also must undertake. I trust (added he) raising his eyes to heaven with a look of unutterable expression) I trust shortly to rejoin them, beyond the fear of separation."

By easy stages the party reached London, where the baron chiefly resided, more from compliance with the humour of his present lady, than any relish he had for noise or show. The carriage stopt at a most superb mansion, in the environs of the court, and while they

were alighting, Lady Edith, in a polite and tender manner, told her, they were now arrived at the mansion, in which, she trusted, their mutual friendship and felicity would be perpetuated.

Olivia was here surprized by a degree of magnificence, surpassing every thing she had hitherto witnessed. The Chateau de Blore was elegant, but here was a weight of splendour, more calculated to oppress than to exhilarate the spirits: it was a gloomy grandeur, which contained nothing of the social ease that reigned in the former place:—on the contrary, all was solemn and stately—a numberless train of servants, richly liveried, ranged along the hall, resembling by their profound silence, pompous statues, rather than living beings. Having passed through several apartments,

ments, richly furnished, Lady Edith conducted her friend to a suit of rooms, which she more immediately called her own. Here Olivia began to respire freely—no more domestics were allowed to enter, than were actually necessary to a proper accommodation and convenience—the furniture was handsome, yet calculated rather for usefulness, than ostentation. This, indeed, was the only part of the house, in which the least appearance of social freedom was to be met with; and here the baron spent most of his time in literary pursuits, or rational conversation with his daughter, to whom he had imparted a similar taste, or the few friends whom he deemed worthy of his confidence. The baroness never entered those apartments, the simplicity of which ill suited her haughty mind. Incapable of being gra-

tified by any thing short of the most ostentatious ceremonies—deeming the dignity of her rank degraded by any diminution of the tedious etiquette, which accompanied even her ordinary movements—she was a person of very limited intellects, but possessing a degree of pride exactly proportioned to her ignorance; nor did she imagine, there could be any thing really desirable in life, that did not include every circumstance of solemn grandeur. As each moment of her existence was measured by the exactest rule of courtly ceremony, the baron felt himself happy, whenever he could escape from her company, and be at liberty to enjoy life agreeably to the more rational ideas he had formed.

—Olivia had been near a week in the Ranspach family, before she was permitted

mitted to enter the presence of the baroness. Lady Edith herself had that honour vouchsafed her but seldom; she ventured, however, to request permission to introduce her young friend, but received a message in return, that the baroness would appoint a season of audience. At length, the important day arrived—Olivia was conducted to a most magnificent apartment, at the upper end of which, beneath an awning of crimson velvet, sat the baroness superbly habited, or rather disfigured, by a tasteless profusion of jewels and embroidery, insomuch, that the human form seemed nearly obscured:—on either side of her were ranged six livery servants, two women knelt at her feet; her stature was of masculine height, and her countenance harsh and forbidding.—

Before

Before this august spectacle, Olivia stood trembling about a quarter of an hour, without the awful silence being once interrupted : she was then told, that she might retire, which she readily did, with the same ceremony she had gone through on entering. Lady Edith, when they were alone, asked, with a good deal of archness in her countenance, whether she did not feel elated by so gracious an interview ; but Olivia was too sensibly hurt to relish the irony ; the fastidious solemnity she had just witnessed, had to her the air of insulting mockery ; and proceeding from a principal of that family, in which she appeared an indigent dependant, had chilled her very soul. The only reply which she could make her ladyship, was by shedding a copious flood of tears.

“ I would

"I would lay a handsome bet (resumed her lively friend) that you consider my mother's deportment as unfriendly and contemptuous—but be not uneasy on that head, since it is no more than her customary manner. I myself do not recollect to have been favoured with her speech these twelve months, except when she has happened to deem a reprimand necessary."

"Fie, Lady Edith—do not attempt to persuade me, that the baroness is thus insensible to the relative charities of life, or capable of suppressing their delightful energies."

"I see, Livy, you know nothing at all of us; I must, therefore, give you a slight sketch of the family picture. You are to know, that my lady-mother is descended from one of the first families in Normandy, and actually imagines herself  
of

of a nature infinitely superior to almost all the world besides. Even my excellent father is not allowed the claim of equality with her, and but for his own personal merit, would fail of commanding respect in a family, composed of her own creatures. But he is too wise not to despise this foible in his wife, and too good to be rendered unhappy thereby."

"Forbear (interrupted Olivia, gravely) thus irreverently to speak of one, to whom you owe the most sacred obligations."

"And what have I said amiss, my sage monitress? I assure you, I know my duty, and the baron would take care that I performed it—but surely you cannot imagine, that a child who has never experienced maternal endearment, can experience those tender sympathies, which that character in humble life inspires.

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This indifference is one of the superlative distinctions of high rank, Olivia."

"I envy them not (answered she)—but let us, if you please, drop the subject."

"What! before I have half finished my sketch!—There is my brother, Lord Edmund, my mother's doating piece, as imperious as she herself could wish him—he is very handsome though, and let me advise you to take care of your heart; for I will add, as a bit of a secret, that he is the greatest debauchee about the court."

"I entreat you, Lady Edith, to have done with your design. I trust your lines are drawn too strong, to be a true resemblance."

With respect to the baroness, however, she was soon convinced, that such

was

was not the case. Immoderately valuing herself on the lustre of her pedigree, that lady held, in the greatest contempt, all those sweet endearments of social and domestic love, which, to the susceptible heart, render the cup of life delicious. Her days were one dull round of gloomy state, in which she seemed to resemble some lifeless statue, placed in a superb mausoleum, rather than a rational being, designed for the active functions of humanity. Her daughter was seldom permitted to enter her presence, and still seldomer honoured with the smallest degree of her notice; and the baron studiously avoided the company of a woman, whose ignorance rendered her despicable in his eye, and whose intolerable humour caused even his own house to be uncomfortable to him. Olivia, knowing that he had married her merely  
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in compliance with the arbitrary will of a father, was no longer at a loss to account for the settled melancholy which had taken possession of his features. This reflection endeared him the more warmly to her amiable heart, and dictated a variety of tender sympathies, and delicate attentions, which daily won upon his affections, and induced him to confess, that his domestic hours were rendered more delightful by the addition of her society, to that of his dear Edith.

Lord Edmund, the heir apparent of this illustrious house, she did not see for some time; nor did his absence appear to be regretted either by the baron or lady Edith. In the encreasing regards of those two amiable personages, she found abundant compensation for the

haughty indifference of the baroness, and began at length to consider her as a sort of nonentity, which could not reasonably be deemed of consequence to the tranquillity her present situation afforded.



When Olivia had spent some months in the Ranspach family, the period which the baron had assigned for finishing the education of Theodore, received its completion, and she felt an augmentation of her happiness, by hearing that he was expected shortly to arrive in town. The baron had procured for him a commission in the service of the emperor. Why this was chosen, rather than a military station in his own country, was a secret, which

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## CHAP. XII.

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WHEN Olivia had spent some months in the Ranspach family, the period which the baron had assigned for finishing the education of Theodore, received its completion, and she felt an augmentation of her happiness, by hearing that he was expected shortly to arrive in town. The baron had procured for him a commission in the service of the emperor. Why this was chosen, rather than a military station in his own country, was a secret,

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which, as the baron had not thought proper to declare, Olivia ventured not to enquire. At length the young soldier met his beloved Olivia at the house of the baron Ranspach.

The nature of their mutual emotion could not have been mistaken by lady Edith, had she not still supposed them the children of the same parents: she therefore pathetically participated in the extatic joy, which reciprocally inspired them. The year which had elapsed since they had seen each other, had effected sensible improvements in the persons of both. By an addition of stature, Olivia appeared more inimitably graceful: the sorrow she had undergone, had indeed taken something from her juvenile vivacity, but at the same time it had rendered her features more interestingly

expressive, and stamped every grace as truly feminine. Theodore was the model of masculine beauty—his countenance had all that animation which sensibility can alone produce, and his whole figure was that of elegance and grace.

“This brother of yours, dear Livy (whispered lady Edith) is wonderfully handsome.—I protest, I could easily have mistaken him for some one of high birth.”

The baron, who overheard her, replied,—“How often, Edith, shall I wish you to discard those base ideas, which have their rise only in pride and prejudice?—do you imagine, that nature exerts her best powers only for the great?—are not *all* her children?—why then should not all be favoured?”

"There is naturally a discriminating difference, my lord, in the air of a nobleman and that of a peasant."

"Not naturally, daughter—artificially there may be. Politeness is rather the gift of nature, than art, and springs from a certain urbanity of soul, which no education can give, though it may improve. I am glad, however, to find you disposed to respect this young man, who is endowed with qualities worthy of your esteem.—Theodore (added the baron, with a deep sigh) would confer honour on nobility."

The first opportunity which the lovers found of being alone together, served to revive a thousand ineffable sensations: the honoured name of St. Leger was repeated with mutual tears; every charming scene of their early youth arose to me-

memory—the tranquillity they had enjoyed beneath his paternal roof, and the felicity resulting from the unconstrained effusions of their artless tenderness, produced a picture so exquisite, as wrung from each a presaging sigh, that those blissful hours were no more to be enjoyed.

“But why (exclaimed Theodore with eagerness) must we passively resign them, Olivia?—Is not happiness even now in our power?—it is, and we will part no more.”

“How!—will Theodore relinquish all the advantages which the patronage of the baron offers him?”

“Why need they be relinquished?—I will repair to the baron, and acquaint him, that we will not be divided. He will

will not object to our immediate union, when informed, that the sainted St. Ledger has consecrated it by his approbation."

Olivia hesitated—she felt herself embarrassed by the opposite influences of prudence and inclination. Theodore, accustomed to receive impressions with that ardour, which age and experience only can moderate, mistook the motive of the embarrassment he witnessed, and abruptly demanded, if she had seen lord Edmund; to which she replied in the negative. Again he repeated the question with a warmth, which both surprised and grieved her. "Why—why is this, Theodore? (cried she, weeping)—wherefore is lord Edmund mentioned to me?"

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Her tears were sufficient to recal him to reflection. He flung himself at her feet, and entreated she would pardon the conduct, which an excess of affection alone could have excited.—“Pardon you! (reiterated she)—and have you then injured me in your judgment, Theodore?—Surely you could not once suspect——”

“No (interrupting her)—I suspect nothing, dearest Olivia, but my own claim to your favour.—Theodore a beggar—a worthless dependant on alms.”

“Is yet dearer to Olivia (returned she) than a crowned monarch.”

“Ah!—were it so, would you refuse to make me your’s?”

“I would refuse to involve the person I prefer, in difficulties, for my sake.”

“Gene-

“Generous girl—that thought ought to have been mine. Shall I, from selfish regards, plunge my Olivia in immediate indigence? Shall I force her from the bosom of affluence and comfort, to share the humble fortunes of one, who must himself depend for bread on the bounty of others? Can you forgive me the interested wish?—and yet, severely as I condemn it, I feel I shall relapse, except you bid me still depend on the stability of your affection.”

“I do bid you do this, my dear Theodore—and promise to live for you alone. Now then, inform me, what induced you to mention lord Edmund’s name?”

“I will answer with candour. The character of this young nobleman is such as causes my heart to palpitate with  
horror,

horror. When I reflect on his being an inmate of the same house with my Olivia—bred up by his mother in the highest opinion of his consequence—a stranger to controul—and a slave to every licentious desire—can I expect that he knows any thing of that delicacy with which purity, like thine, should be approached? It is not the loss of your affection that I fear, for surely virtue cannot voluntarily ally itself to vice; but his brutal impetuosity alarms me. Your beauty must necessarily inflame a mind unprincipled as his; and once inflamed, will he endure opposition, who never has been taught to submit to reason? Lord Edmund's will is his only supreme law.—Oh! Olivia—can you be insensible to your danger?"

"I trust, at least, that those dreadful apprehensions are groundless. If you  
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can rely on the permanence of my faith, already betrothed to yourself, be easy for the rest ; remembering that you leave me under the immediate protection of the baron, and favoured with the friendship of lady Edith. This ought to relieve us both of every gloomy apprehension, however well grounded it might be."

During the month which Theodore spent at the baron's, Olivia could not but remark, that no mention was made of introducing him to the baroness, from whence she concluded, that it was the baron's choice to conceal this instance of generosity as much as might be from her observation. Lady Edith's apartments were appropriated to those social enjoyments, which the four amiable persons experienced in each other's company. The baron, at this period, dis-

discovered more cheerfulness than he had for many years been observed to do—but fond, as he apparently was, of the conversation of Theodore, he expressed some impatience for his departure, pleasantly saying—“ I must not allow those fascinating girls to frustrate my ambition of forming a hero—nor must you, Theodore, forget that a crown of bays, adorning your brows, will render you a more captivating figure in the eye of the ladies.”

The young soldier, having received the most liberal proofs of the baron's regard and patronage, was at length compelled to commence the martial life by embarking for Germany. He had letters of recommendation to some of the principal commanders in the imperial army, and little doubt could be

entertained of his being raised to an eminent station in the emperor's service. But neither glory or ambition were at this time the predominant impulse of his mind, which glowed with more gentle sensations, and fondly lingered over Olivia's dear idea. She had, however, positively forbidden every expression of a passion, which, it is probable, the baron would have disapproved, as interfering with the generous plan he had formed. In bidding her farewell, he was therefore obliged to repress those tender energies, which rivetted his eyes on her palid face, and to modulate the liveliest passion which ever animated a susceptible heart to the more equal temperament of fraternal affection. Lady Edith did not quit her chamber on the morning of his departure, and Olivia, now at liberty to indulge a sensibility

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it would have been difficult for her to restrain, retired to her room, to bewail, without interruption, a separation from him, whose endearing society was to her the whole of human felicity. The restraint which she had deemed prudent to put on herself, in the presence of the baron, now rendered her feelings the more exquisite. When summoned to dinner, she found lady Edith in the dining-room, with manifest tokens of disorder in her air and countenance; her eyes were red with weeping, and her dress neglected; she spoke little, and seemed studiously to avoid all mention of Theodore. In the evening, the baron said, "I trust, dear Livy, that your brother is now embarking for the continent, from whence I hope to see him return with glory." To this, lady Edith replied, with eagerness—"I cannot imagine, my

lord, why you would send him into a foreign service, to acquire a reputation, which might, with more honour, have been obtained at home." The baron, rather displeased, returned,—“ Had I deemed it expedient, Edith, to explain the motives of my choice, your present ill-timed observation had been unnecessary.” He then left the room, in order to retire for the night.

“ I fear I have offended my father (cried lady Edith)—yet surely, Olivia, this matter is really incomprehensible—and moreover, was it not cruel to separate so widely, an affectionate brother and sister?”

“ When I reflect, my dear friend, that Theodore had no natural claim to the baron’s generous concern, I cannot think myself at liberty to dictate the mode

mode of his most beneficent proceeding. The consideration that Theodore possesses such a patron, is sufficient to excite my gratitude and joy."

"If you are satisfied (somewhat peevishly) I *ought* to be so."

Olivia having never before seen the least indication of ill-humour in this lady, stood for some time abashed and astonished: she observed lady Edith had withdrawn in silence, on which she also retired, ruminating on what had passed with no very pleasurable feelings: the nature of her situation, added to her susceptibility, naturally rendered her delicately sensible to the least symptom of slight or indifference. On the following morning, however, lady Edith, conscious of the impropriety of her behaviour, and too generous to prove an

occasion of wounding the exquisite sensibility of a friend she sincerely loved, appeared anxious to remove every unpleasant idea that might have been raised, by evincing a more than ordinary affection in her manner to Olivia, who could not but observe, that an air of dejection hung over the features of her ladyship, the cause of which she ventured not to explore, as the other seemed industrious to conceal it.

Some little time afterwards, lord Edmund returned to Ranspach house, from an excursion he had for some months been engaged in. Not entirely capable of disregarding the apprehensions which Theodore had expressed, Olivia would have avoided his sight—but this was not practicable, as he often visited his sister's apartment, and one day happened

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to enter it, when Olivia was sitting alone. This was the first interview, and his manners immediately evinced that it had made an impression on him, which he could not think of without terror. She arose to withdraw—he bowed, and made way for her to pass in that kind of silence, which is often the instantaneous effect of admiration and surprize. The person of this young nobleman was handsome in no ordinary degree, and there was about him an air of dignity, extremely striking;—his eyes, large and black, were fierce, and if they had any expression, it certainly was not that of delicacy or sweetness:—accustomed to command with arbitrary authority, his gesture was haughty, and the tone of his voice harsh and imperious:—still he was generally allowed to be one of the finest gentlemen of the court, as he certainly  
was

was the most vicious.—Lady Edith, meeting with Olivia soon after, said—  
“ You have seen this brother of mine, Livy—(and added with peculiar emphasis)—he also has seen you.”

Olivia trembled, and changing colour, replied—“ I saw lord Edmund, it is true ; but, no doubt, I was too insignificant an object for his observation.”

“ I would it were so—but you would then have been the first woman who, without absolute deformity, had escaped his notice. Lord Edmund, my dear, is a libertine without delicacy or honour—however, provided you do not find a traitor within your own breast, my father’s protection will be your security.”

“ You alarm me, dear Edith, by this language—surely it has no serious import.”

“ I will

“ I will only tell you, that lord Edmund has just been speaking of you to me, in terms of high admiration. With him, to desire and obtain have hitherto been synonymous expressions.—Good heavens ! you tremble !——my dearest girl, reflect that lord Edmund's father is your protector, and his sister your unfailing friend.”

That consideration was indeed the only one capable of mitigating the horror she felt at lady Edith's discourse. From this time she resolved never to be alone ; yet she dreaded that the presence of lady Edith would necessarily expose her to that of her brother—but the case was not precisely this. A strange alteration had visibly taken place in her ladyship's temper, who, from being extremely lively and fond of conversation, was become  
pensive,

pensive, gloomy, and addicted to retirement : she passed the chief part of her time in her dressing-room, where Olivia accompanied her, and by this means escaped those many occasions that otherwise would have subjected her to the company of lord Edmund. But besides those apprehensions which began to render her present situation far less pleasant, she felt considerable distress on another account. Having continued for some time to watch the turn of her friend's temper, without being able to ascribe it to any thing more than a splenetic humour, she became at length convinced, that it arose from a secret important cause, which she had attempted to explore so far as the rules of good manners admitted, but without success. The general deportment of lady Edith was that of silent dejection ; she cared not  
for

for conversation, and frequently sighed deeply ; on some occasions she appeared to endure an inward struggle, which forced showers of tears, and agonized her whole frame : once she replied to the sympathetic address of Olivia—" Do not enquire what never can be revealed—rest satisfied that I love you with unabated sincerity—leave me to my own perturbed thoughts."—The baron, with much concern, had noticed the pensive and palid aspect of his beloved daughter, and often tenderly urged her on the subject, without obtaining any information calculated to satisfy curiosity, or to relieve the anxiety he felt on her account.





## CHAP. XIII.

THE situation of Olivia was now far from desirable, and she would have quitted it, to put herself once more under the protection of the count and madam De Blore, had she not felt the sacred ties of gratitude and friendship forbidding her to desert an amiable friend, under the immediate pressure of distress—though to the nature of that distress, she was an entire stranger. Lord Edmund had more than once attempted to get a  
billet-

billet-doux into her hand, but these she had rejected with firmness and disdain. One evening, passing through the gallery which led to lady Edith's dressing-room, she was met by this nobleman, who had purposely waited there. He caught hold of her hand with impetuosity, and obliged her to hear a declaration of a passion, which he had nourished from the time he first beheld her:—"and now, madam (concluded he in a haughty tone), will you absolutely reject the heir of Ranspach?"

"Were there no other motives, my lord, you have now suggested one, which must for ever render such addresses inadmissible."

"Other motives!—Ah! there is then a more favoured lover."

"My rejection of lord Edmund's suit does not necessarily imply this."

With these words she burst from him, and rushing into the dressing-room, with a countenance expressive both of terror and indignation, awakened lady Edith from her usual abstraction, to enquire the reason of her disorder. Olivia having candidly satisfied her, she resumed,—“This is the crisis which I dreaded—beware of a vicious libertine, my sweet friend.”

“Oh! lady Edith—if an immoveable indifference can secure me from lord Edmund, I am safe indeed.”

“I am glad to hear this—my brother is unworthy such a heart as yours—even were his intentions honourable, I could not wish merit, like my Olivia’s, should be sacrificed to a character depraved and vile, as lord Edmund’s——”

“Were lord Edmund to lay his hand and fortune at my feet—and were my  
rank

rank equal with his—still would I reject him with unalterable determination.”

“ You are happy in such becoming sentiments.—Oh ! may you never, like me, have to contend with a passion, that every moment insults my reason.”

“ Lady Edith then suggests a clue to that deportment, which has so deeply afflicted all her friends.”

“ How !—no, I have not owned the cause of my infelicity—that is more than I dare do to myself. Something, indeed, oppresses my spirits, but time and resolution must conquer it.”

“ But why would my friend thus struggle with emotions, which probably she need not blush to avow ?”

“ Not blush to allow ! Shall the daughter of Ranspach degrade herself by an unequal alliance ?—No, Olivia,—

I may suffer, but will never sink below the dignity which my birth confers.— Happy you, to whom so painful a struggle must ever be unknown.”

Olivia forbore to urge her farther on this subject. She was now convinced, that an improper passion preyed on her heart, and the discovery was the more afflicting, as it was evident, that the agitation of her mind daily destroyed her health, without a possibility that friendship could soothe the one, or medicine relieve the other. The baron could no longer repress his anxiety, but taking Olivia one day to his closet, he thus addressed her ;—“ Under the distress which I must, as a father, endure on Edith’s account, I feel some mitigation of it, in the thought that you, my dear Olivia, may prove instrumental to the restoring

restoring my paternal comforts. Tell me then, candidly, what is the occasion of my daughter's unfortunate dejection."

Olivia, for some moments, was conscious of a very delicate embarrassment :—on the one hand, she could not, consistent either with honour or delicacy, reveal what she had discovered ; yet on the other, a disclosure was absolutely necessary to the peace, both of her friend and the baron. Observing that she hesitated to reply, he resumed—" I perceive you are in possession of the unhappy secret, and perhaps may not be entirely satisfied of the propriety of the request I have made. Now then, dear Olivia, hear and report my sentiments to your friend.—I am not one of those arbitrary parents, who imagine the inclinations of their children can

move but in the line of parental direction ; nor am I so prejudiced in judgment, as to conclude nothing truly valuable but wealth and rank.—I cannot for a moment believe, that Edith would view a vicious character with esteem—her principles forbid such an idea—but it is possible she may have seen merit in an humble sphere. Assure her, then, that she has a father, who deems rank and fortune inferior considerations, if placed in competition with her happiness :—tell her this, if you please, Olivia, and if possible, induce her to place confidence in that father, who is neither the slave of prejudice or pride.”

If Olivia esteemed the baron Ranspach before, she now almost adored him, for the noble picture of his soul which this incident had displayed. She flew  
with

with rapture to execute the commission he had entrusted her with, and for a moment a beam of pleasure brightened in the languid eyes of lady Edith—but the effect was momentary. “My father’s tenderness (said she) cannot reconcile me to myself—I thank him for, but never will avail myself of it.” She then reclined her head on her bosom, which seemed bursting with sighs. Olivia thought she discovered, in this reply, more of the baroness’s disposition, than her friend’s character had till now divulged; yet when she considered the force of early prejudice, she was more inclined to pity than condemn this trait of temper, and secretly congratulated herself on being sprung of a plebeian class, below the influence of prejudices, which often painfully counterbalance the boasted superiority of the great.

Lord

Lord Edmund, repeatedly repulsed by Olivia with unshaken firmness, appeared to have relinquished his pursuit, and she began to hope such was actually the case, when she was surprised by a summons to attend the baroness, who appeared in the same solemn state she had before seen, except that all the attendants were withdrawn, but one waiting-woman, standing at the left hand of the canopy. As Olivia advanced, trembling and fluttered, the baroness cast on her a tremendous frown, and turning to her woman, said, "Gertrude, dost thou discern any thing in this plebeian, which might be expected to engage the notice of a son of mine?"—Here knitting her brows in terrific severity, she addressed Olivia thus:—"How happens it that a peasant—a creature fed from my table—should dare

dare to disdain the condescensions of lord Edmund?"

"Madam (cried the astonished and terrified Olivia)—Madam.

"I say, how durst so vile a worm presume to sport with the passion he professes to entertain?—a passion which reflects lustre on thy original dirt."

"Your ladyship cannot possibly be serious!"

"My lady (cried the officious waiting-woman) does not jest with persons of your class."

"Peace, Gertrude (resumed the baroness)—I would have her know, that lord Edmund never was or shall be contradicted.—Did you, child, doubt of his liberality?—be satisfied he would amply reward the regard you might bestow on his suit."

"Gra-

“ Gracious powers!—can this be a mother ?”

“ My lady’s family (cried the pert attendant) never did a mean action.”

“ Is it not mean to endeavour to sully the honour of a friendless orphan, whom some worthy individuals of the family have taken under their protection ?”

“ Honour ! (reiterated the baroness with disdain)—a plebeian talk of honour !”

“ Such people as you (rejoined Gertrude) would do well to consult interest, and leave honour to their betters.”

“ That may be your way of thinking, and may befit you. I take the liberty of assuring her ladyship, that had she wished me the wife, rather than the mistress of lord Edmund, the proposal would have been rejected with equal firmness.”

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At these words, with a look of ineffable contempt, she quitted the room, wrapt in astonishment, that a mother could act the part of a vile pander to a licentious son. The proceeding, however calculated to impress a virtuous mind with horror, was entirely reconcileable with the character of the baroness, who had no higher idea of female chastity, than as a quality which it was expedient for women of rank to profess, because a breach of it usually procured a deep revenge from the males of a family thus degraded. As for the vulgar herd, whom she had ever considered as existing merely for the convenience or pleasure of the great, she could allow them no properties, either of body or mind, which ought not to be rendered subservient to the will of the superior orders. Olivia's favour was necessary  
to

to the happiness of her son, and she deemed it the highest degree of insolence, to reject the overtures he had condescended to make her. Inflamed with rage, this partial and imperious mother sent for her son, and communicated the result of the above conference, but far from suspecting the effect which in fact it produced. Lord Edmund, unprincipled, was compelled to feel the awful force of genuine virtue, and to admire the magnanimity of soul which Olivia's conduct had displayed. It was something which he had never met with before; and if it charmed not for the sake of virtue, he at least admired it for that of novelty. The errors of his education began to recoil on the parent who had fostered them :—she had taught him to acknowledge no director but his own will. If then a marriage with Olivia  
would

would disappoint the ambitious views of his mother, could she blame him for preferring his own choice to her? He moreover knew, that the family estates were entailed beyond the possibility of his being deprived of them. Ever rash and impetuous, he had not long indulged those reflections, when immediately summoning Jeremie, his confidential valet, he by his hand dispatched a formal offer of marriage to Olivia, who returned a brief answer, that were there no considerations due from her to the honour and interests of a family, to which she was obliged, there would still be an invincible barrier to an union with lord Edmund; for that her affections were unalterably engaged. The trusty valet ventured to expostulate on the folly of rejecting so advantageous a proposal; but finding her immoveable, he added,

that he so well knew his lord's temper, as to be convinced, she would repent her present coolness. In the fulness of her heart, she apprized lady Edith of all that passed, who, no ways surprized, coolly said—"Lord Edmund's passions are not subject to controul, and I can believe him sincere in the offer of marriage which he has made you—I wish his character were deserving your esteem, or that you would undertake that work of reformation, which perhaps it would be in your power to effect—but what do I ask?—so vast a blessing cannot be merited by him, or reserved for me."

"Your kind partiality, lady Edith, prompts you to overlook the impropriety of lord Edmund's proposal—but to cut the matter short, while Theodore lives, I will never be another's."

"Theo-

“Theodore! (exclaimed lady Edith, turning pale)—he is not your brother then!—Ah! why was I not apprized of this?—Olivia, I conjure you to pardon an involuntary error—yet you cannot—you must hate me—separate me from your affection as a perfidious rival.”

Mute with astonishment, Olivia suffered her to proceed in a strain of self-accusation—then bursting into tears, she threw herself into her arms, and exclaimed—“Is it thus I am fated to repay the obligations I owe your generous friendship—rather let me be annihilated, than an impediment to the felicity of those I love.”

Lady Edith made no answer, but arose, and walked several times about the room with great emotion. At length she became more tranquil, and seating

herself by the side of Olivia, she threw her arms affectionately round her neck, and said—"The discovery you have made, dear Olivia, has done more towards enabling me to conquer an unhappy passion, than any motive that I have been able to oppose to it :—much mental anguish had been spared me, had I sooner understood the nature of your attachment to the amiable Theodore; for though I will not say it was impossible for me to forget what I owed to myself and family, I can aver, that friendship would for ever have precluded every sentiment contrary to your peace :—henceforth, since Theodore is not your brother, he shall be mine—I will regard him as such—I shall be pleased in facilitating your union with him, and in the friendship of both shall find my future peace."

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These sentiments were not the effusion of a moment. From this time lady Edith gradually recovered her tranquillity, and the regard she had conceived for Theodore by degrees assumed the nature of sisterly affection.—The baron, still a stranger to the cause of her late melancholy, rejoiced in its removal, and happiness once more began to irradiate the little social circle. Letters also arrived from Germany, informing the baron of Theodore's welfare: that which was inclosed for Olivia, breathed the tenderest effusions of chaste and lively affection. He acquainted her, that in a sally against the Turks, it had been his good fortune to acquire some degree of reputation in the army; in consequence of which, the emperor his master had honoured him with distinguishing marks of approbation. In fine, he considered himself

himself as in the immediate road to that preferment, which would amply enable him to support the woman he adored in a style of comfort, and even elegance—  
“ And now, beloved Olivia (he concluded), where exist those objections which once you made to the conferring on me the most supreme degree of felicity I am capable of conceiving?—no obstacle remains—and I will shortly solicit leave of absence, in order to claim and receive the consummation of those vows, which were long since recorded in our page of destiny.”

END OF VOL. I.



